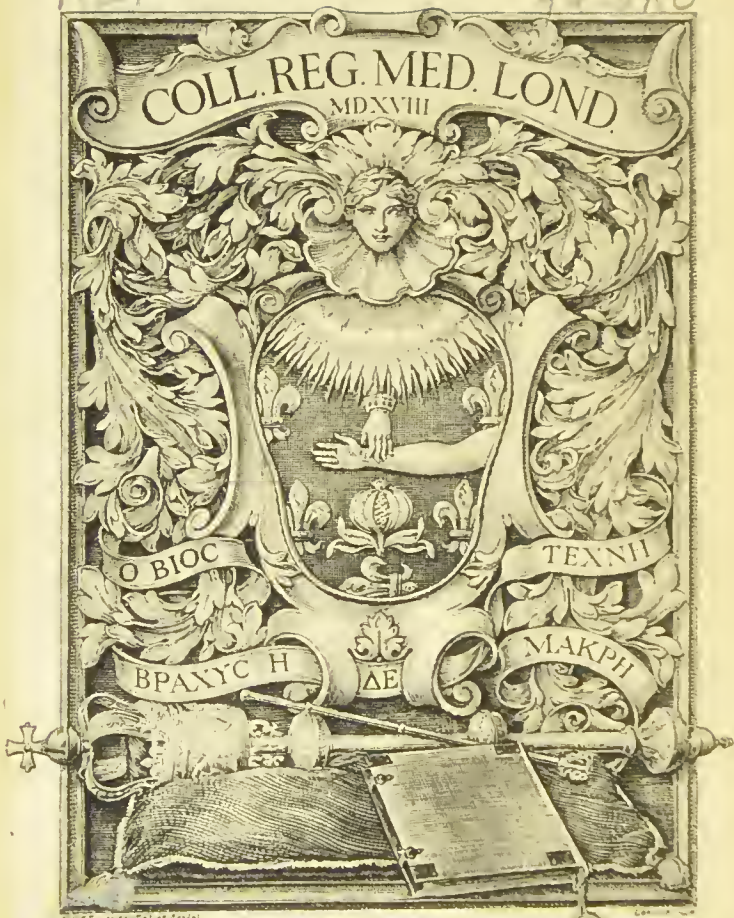


RECOLLECTIONS OF  
DR. JOHN BROWN

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DR. JOHN BROWN



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# RECOLLECTIONS OF DR. JOHN BROWN

Author of 'Rab and His Friends,' etc.

WITH A SELECTION FROM  
HIS CORRESPONDENCE

BY

ALEXANDER REDDIE

M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.S.E.

His life was gentle. . . .  
Nature he loved, and next to Nature Art.

London  
PERCIVAL & CO.

1893

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ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS	
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## INTRODUCTION

A LARGE reprint from the *Edinburgh Medical Journal* of my presidential address to the Harveian Society in April 1890, entitled 'Dr. John Brown: His Life and Work, with Narrative Sketches of Syme in the Old Minto House Hospital and Dispensary Days,' having been expended among town and country members of that Society, a few other medical men, and old friends of the late Professor Syme and Dr. John Brown, I have been induced by its favourable reception and at the suggestion of many friends to reproduce it more as a biographical sketch of Dr. Brown. To this end much new matter has been introduced, while the bulk of what appeared in the original paper relating to Mr. Syme has been transferred to an Appendix.

Shortly after Dr. Brown's removal from our midst, several touching *In Memoriam* notices appeared in the newspapers of the day; and subsequently articles in some of the monthlies—namely, an obituary notice in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal* of June 1882; a highly artistic sketch by Mr. Andrew Lang in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* in December 1882;<sup>1</sup> an erudite article by Professor Masson in *Macmillan's Magazine* of February 1883;<sup>2</sup> a short but lively paper in 1887 by Miss G. T. Ross; a bright and loving 'Outline' in 1889 by Miss E. T. M'Laren;<sup>3</sup> and in the recent January and February numbers of the *United Presbyterian Magazine* a clever and discriminating article by Robert Richardson, B.A. But notwithstanding these various somewhat fragmentary productions, I am aware that there is a call by many who ardently admired and loved 'Dr. John,' and a strong desire felt by others who have known him only from his writings or name,

<sup>1</sup> F. Warne & Co., London and New York.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted lately in *Edinburgh Sketches and Memories*. A. & C. Black, London and Edinburgh.

<sup>3</sup> *Dr. John Brown and his Sister Isabella*. Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1890.

to have an extended memoir, from which they might learn more about him. I am well aware that the difficulties in undertaking satisfactorily such a task are great ; but inspired by long familiar acquaintance with Dr. Brown, and an intimate knowledge and sympathetic appreciation of his character and work, I have endeavoured in the following pages to do my best. In this effort I have chosen, by quotations from his published papers and private correspondence now before me, and from varied reminiscences, to make him to a large extent his own biographer, thus presenting to the reader a truer ideal of the man than could be conveyed by any amount of editorial description, criticism, or literary embellishment.

The occasion when the address or 'oration' was delivered was the one hundred and eighth Festival of the Harveian Society of Edinburgh, when I held the honoured position of its President. Then, instead of attempting to dress up in a new garb the well chronicled facts connected with the illustrious William Harvey,<sup>1</sup> his great discovery of the circulation of the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, No. II.

blood, or the times in which he lived, or attempting anything on the lines of scientific research, I chose, in accordance with the spirit of Harvey's will, to discourse on those of professional reminiscence and biography. With that intent I selected the memories of James Syme, the distinguished surgeon and teacher, and John Brown, the popular writer and beloved physician; and in the accomplishment of that design I naturally had much to say of their relations to each other and to myself during the important period of our lives—from 1829 to 1852—when Minto House existed, first as a surgical hospital and dispensary, and afterwards as a private *maison de santé*, and a public dispensary.

Many of the Harveians present on the occasion of the Festival were only boys at school in 1870, when Syme died; a larger number were unborn in 1843, the end of his first decade as Professor of Clinical Surgery in the University of Edinburgh; and only one besides myself, namely, Sir Douglas Maclagan, was then present who knew anything of Mr. Syme or John Brown in the early days of Minto House Surgical Hospital. I considered, therefore, that it



was well to bring before the existing generation of young docters the memories of those two remarkable men, and also the existenece of that unique institution which marked so important an epoch in both of their lives. And although my own life and work was so much interwoven with those of my revered master and nearly lifelong friend in the management of the institution which kept us so many years in close connection, yet I have endeavoured in the following narrative to avoid as far as possible referenece to that which concerns myself.

In regard to the eorrespondence introduced in the following pages, I tender my best thanks to Sir Douglas Maelagan, Sir Theodore Martin, the trustees of the late Andrew Coventry Dick, Sheriff of Bute, Mrs. Brewster Macpherson, Miss Harvey, daughter of the late Sir George Harvey, *P.R.S.A.*, and Miss Logan, daughter of the late Alexander Logan, Sheriff of Forfarshire, for the letters furnished by them, and to John Brown, Esq., for sanetioning their use. I beg also to thank Professor Veitch, the Rev. Dr. Walter C. Smith, and Mr. Robert Richardson for permission to use their *in memoriam* verses ; and

my warmest thanks are due to Mr. J. R. Findlay of Aberlour for the interesting communication, sent to me when the work was in the hands of the publishers, which I have placed in the Appendix.<sup>1</sup> In regard to some of the illustrations, I thank James Syme, Esq., for the use of the engraving of his Father and the woodcut of Minto House; and Messrs. Moffat of Edinburgh, and Fergus of Largs, for photographs which have been reproduced.

ALEXANDER PEDDIE.

15 RUTLAND STREET,  
EDINBURGH, *March* 1893.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix, No. I.

## DR. JOHN BROWN

JOHN BROWN was born on the 22nd September 1810, at Biggar, Lanarkshire, of highly distinguished intellectual and spiritual lineage. His father, the Rev. John Brown, was then minister of the Secession Church there, afterwards of the church in Rose Street, Edinburgh, and latterly of Broughton Place. He received the title of D.D. in 1830 from Jefferson College, Pennsylvania; was the Professor of Practical and Exegetical Theology in the United Presbyterian Church; was the author of various works of high repute for Biblical learning, critical acumen, and evangelical teaching; and a preacher of great power and popularity. John's grandfather, again, was the Rev. John Brown of Whitburn, a devout and popular minister and author in the same denomination,—in which also were his three grand-uncles, the Rev. Ebenezer Brown of Inverkeithing, the Rev. Dr.

Thomas Brown of Dalkeith, and the Rev. Dr. William Brown, long Secretary of the Scottish Missionary Society, all men of piety, mental capacity, and diversified distinctiveness. John's great-grandfather was the celebrated Rev. John Brown of Haddington, the author of *The Self-interpreting Bible*, of whom the story is told of his having—while a herd-laddie on the slopes of the Lomonds—taught himself Greek, and walked over-night twenty-four miles to a shop in St. Andrews in order to buy a Greek Testament. The bookseller, surprised at the request from such a youth, informed some professors who came in, and one of the latter got a Testament from a shelf, and looking out a passage, said, 'Boy, read this, and you shall have it for nothing.' It was accordingly won, to the astonishment and admiration of those present; and our Dr. John has told us, in language strikingly beautiful and terse,<sup>1</sup> that 'that Testament has come into my possession and is highly prized as a memento of the heroic old man of Haddington, for whom my father had a peculiar reverence,—as,

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Subsecivæ*, vol. ii. (or series). ed. 1882. 'Letter to John Cairns, D.D.,' pp. 66, 67. All quotations will be made from this edition.—*Vol.* or *Series* meaning the same thing.

indeed, we all have. He was our king, the founder of our dynasty; we dated from him; and he was "hedged" accordingly by a certain sacredness or divinity;' and that 'this little, worn old book was regarded by my father, and is by myself, as the sword of the Spirit, which our ancestor so nobly won, and wore, and warred with.'

John was six years old when his gentle and saintly mother died; but while thus early deprived of her tender care, his father's love seemed drawn out to him in greater tenderness and solicitude as his companion, instructor, and guide. They slept together in his father's study—a small room; and as John has pathetically written, 'I remember often awaking far on in the night or morning, and seeing that keen, beautiful, intense face bending over those Rosenmüllers, Ernestis, Storrs, and Kuinoels—the fire out, and the grey dawn peering through the window; and when he heard me move he would speak to me in the foolish words of endearment my mother was wont to use, and come to bed, and take me, warm as I was, into his cold bosom. *Vitringa in Jesaiam* I especially remember,—a noble folio. Even then, with

that eagerness to communicate what he had himself found, he would try to make me, small man as I was, "apprehend" [a favourite expression of his father's] what he and Vitranga between them had made out, of the fifty-third chapter of his favourite prophet, the princely Isaiah.'<sup>1</sup>

Born of such blood, and cradled and brought up in an intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, there is no wonder that in John's future life an expansion of mental powers, and a growth of the Spirit, should undergo progressive development. His desire for knowledge was early shown. Writing in his fiftieth year he said, 'When a boy, and visiting at a country mansion, that fortnight is still to me like the memory of some happy dream; the old library, the big chair in which I huddled myself up for hours with the New Arabian Nights, and all the old-fashioned and unforgotten books I found there.'<sup>2</sup>

My acquaintance with John Brown began when we were of like age in 1822, on the occasion of his father's translation to the congregation of Rose Street, Edinburgh, and when my father assisted at the

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Subsecivæ*, vol. ii. pp. 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53.

‘Induction’ ceremony. We sat together on the pulpit stairs—by special permission as the ministers’ sons—the church being crowded to excess; and I felt drawn to him more than to any youth I had met before, impressed by his looks of sweetness, intelligence, and earnestness, and the keen interest he showed in the proceedings; and from the fact, likewise, that as there was a book under his arm, I thought he must be an awfully studious and clever fellow. On further intimacy I soon discovered indications of those characteristic traits of mind and disposition which distinguished him in after life: gentleness and geniality, quickness of observation, a lover of books, an excellent scholar, and having a lively appreciation of the beautiful in nature and art, and of everything in the smallest degree odd or humorous. In the ‘Letter’ already quoted, he has told us that his first tasting the flavour of a joke, the first shock and relish of humour, of mental tickling by ‘a word being made to carry a double meaning—and all the lighter of it’—was on hearing that a big, perspiring countryman one day rushed into the Black Bull coach-office, Edinburgh, shouting, ‘Are yir insides a’ oot?’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Subsecivæ*, ii. p. 93.

John was unquestionably more 'auld-farrant' than the generality of boys. In his ease evidently 'the boy was father of the man;' but though at this period of life there were the indications of a fine mental organisation, he was by no means soft or spiritless. In that inimitable description of a dog-fight in the introduction of 'Rab and his Friends,' and especially that which tells of his liberating with a cobbler's knife the head of Rab from a humiliating muzzle, and so enabling that hero 'to do' in a twinkling for the 'game chicken,'—if that part of the story of Rab is true, he evinced the genuine pluck of the most spirited youth; or, if it is fiction, it is evidence that in his spirit he had the desire to act thus. However, I do not think John ever engaged in the ordinary games and sports of boys, which in those times were football, shinty, hounds and hares, or the sham fights suggested by the elassical readings of the Roman wars, or by the recent excitements connected with the Peninsular Campaign. Besides, I never heard of his playing a round of golf, which was a favourite game on Bruntsfield Links in those days before its surroundings became populous: or firing a



shot, or even angling, although brought up in a district so favourable for the pursuit of the 'gentle art,' as were the beautiful upper reaches of the Clyde and Tweed, with their many lovely tributary streams and burns. Indeed, I remember him in later years saying, that on one occasion he 'tried to fish, and caught everything,—but fish!' He was, however, like his father, a bold and excellent horseman.

John was tutored entirely by his father before coming to Edinburgh in 1822; he was then placed for two years under teachers of the name of Arnott and Steele; afterwards was transferred to the Rector's class of the High School under Dr. Carson, in which, during the usual two years' course, he proved himself an excellent scholar, especially in Greek, the taste for which was shown to the latest day of his life; and completed his classical and literary education in attending classes in the University. In all of these classes he was associated with several boys, who remained among his intimate friends through life, namely, Sir Theodore Martin, the late Lord President Inglis, Lord Moncreiff, Sir Douglas Maclagan, the late Dr. Benjamin Bell, etc.

In May 1827, at the age of seventeen, by the encouragement of the Rev. John Belfrage, M.D., of Slateford, he entered on the study of medicine, and at once began an apprenticeship with Mr. Syme. Lapse of time probably may have to some extent obliterated the name of Belfrage from the denomination with which he was connected, or even the sphere in which he laboured—*tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis*;—but a few, as I do, may still remember him, or may have heard of him not only as an able and devoted Seceder minister, but also as a wise, energetic and successful amateur physician among his own people in the then rural village and district of Slateford; and one who was not unfrequently called into consultation with Dr. Abercrombie and other physicians in Edinburgh in critical cases. Dr. Abercrombie has been styled by John Brown our ‘Scottish Sydenham;’ and in his panegyric on Dr. Belfrage he says: ‘Belfrage was a grèat man *in posse*, if ever I saw one,—“ a village Hampden.” Greatness was of his essence: nothing paltry, nothing secondary, nothing untrue. Large in body, large and handsome in face, lofty in manners to his equals or superiors, homely, familiar, cordial

with the young and the poor,—I never met with a more truly royal nature, more native and endued to rule, guide, and benefit mankind. He was for ever scheming for the good of others, and chiefly in the way of helping them to help themselves.’<sup>1</sup>

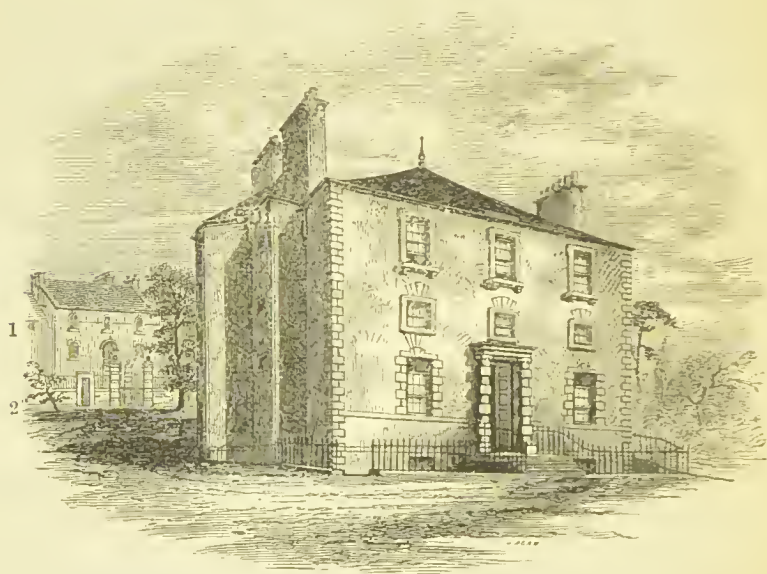
John was apprenticed to Syme, then prophetically looked on by Dr. Belfrage as the rising star of surgery in Scotland. Syme was in his twenty-eighth year, while John was his third apprentice; and forty-five years afterwards this grateful tribute was paid to his master’s memory, whom he may be said to have almost worshipped: ‘Perhaps I was too near Mr. Syme to see and measure him accurately, but he remains in my mind as one of the best and ablest and most beneficent of men. He was my master; my apprentice-fee bought him his first carriage—a gig, and I got the first ride in it, and he was my friend. He was, I believe, the greatest surgeon Scotland ever produced; and I cannot conceive a greater, hardly of as great, a clinical teacher.’<sup>2</sup>

John was indentured after Syme had given up his

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Subsecivæ*, p. 77. Series ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ‘Mr. Syme,’ Series i., p. 392.

anatomical class, and was now teaching surgery in the Extra-Mural School, and struggling to obtain a footing in surgical practice. Soon thereafter, May 1829, Minto House Surgical Hospital and Dispensary



BACK VIEW OF MINTO HOUSE—FACING THE NORTH.

1. Old Trades' Maiden Hospital.
2. Argyle Square—now Chambers Street.

was founded by Syme. This was done by his taking a long lease of a fine old mansion in Argyle Square, originally built by the Minto family, but which some years since was swept away along with the square and other historically old buildings in the formation of

that now noble thoroughfare, Chambers Street, in which, near the site of the hospital, the Medical School has been built, to which the commemorative name of Minto House has been applied.

The circumstance which led to this bold venture of Syme's in opening a public hospital with twenty-four beds was the opposition which he encountered from certain surgeons and their friends to prevent him obtaining an appointment on the surgical staff of the Royal Infirmary. Advised and encouraged chiefly by the two worthies, Belfrage, and Abercrombie, and believing thoroughly in his own strength in course of time to storm the surgical citadel by rivalry in good works, or at any rate to obtain at an early period high position in surgical fame, he estimated that the probable cost of maintaining such an institution would, to a large extent, be met by the board in the hospital of a resident surgeon or pupil, the fees of a limited number of pupils for clinical instruction, and help from the public in donations and subscriptions; while a large private income might be expected from apprentice fees and a systematic course of surgery. In these calculations he was not disappointed; for

instead of wrecking his professional progress and prospects, the spirited action of founding and carrying on this unique institution, his notable surgical achievements, and his lucid clinical and systematic teaching and publications, speedily gained for him the favour of the public and the profession. The twenty-four beds of the hospital were constantly occupied with most interesting and important cases of surgical disease; the dispensary waiting-room and outdoor attendance were in much request; the clinical roll of pupils, to the limited number of forty, was always complete; the systematic surgical class-room, accommodating upwards of 250, was crowded; the number of those apprenticed to him at a high fee was quite unprecedented in the surgical annals of our city; and, finally, in less than five years Syme was Professor of Clinical Surgery in the University, and obtained in virtue of that office the Clinical Surgery Wards in the Royal Infirmary.

It was on the 15th November 1830, by the advice also of Drs. Belfrage and Abercrombie—the one a family friend, and the other our family doctor—that I became an apprentice of Mr. Syme, eighteen months

after the establishment of the hospital. John Brown was then third, while I was thirteenth on the roll of apprentices. The institution was then in its full swing of active, attractive, and highly beneficial work ; and its fame and popularity were great, not merely in the city, but throughout the length and breadth of the land, notwithstanding the rivalry of the Royal Infirmary and surgical lecturers so powerful as were Liston, Lizars, and several others.

John Brown had from the beginning of the institution done much good work in its different departments as dispenser, dresser, clerk, and assistant, as well as formerly in connection with Syme's surgical class and practice, and was a great favourite of his master—indeed, more of a companion than a pupil. He was also notably popular with the fellow-apprentices, nurses, and patients, whose regard and admiration arose from his general intelligence, insight of character, relish for anything humorous, his quaint remarks, ready anecdotes, gentle manners, and the possession of that singularly sweet and sympathetic countenance which he retained to the end of his days.



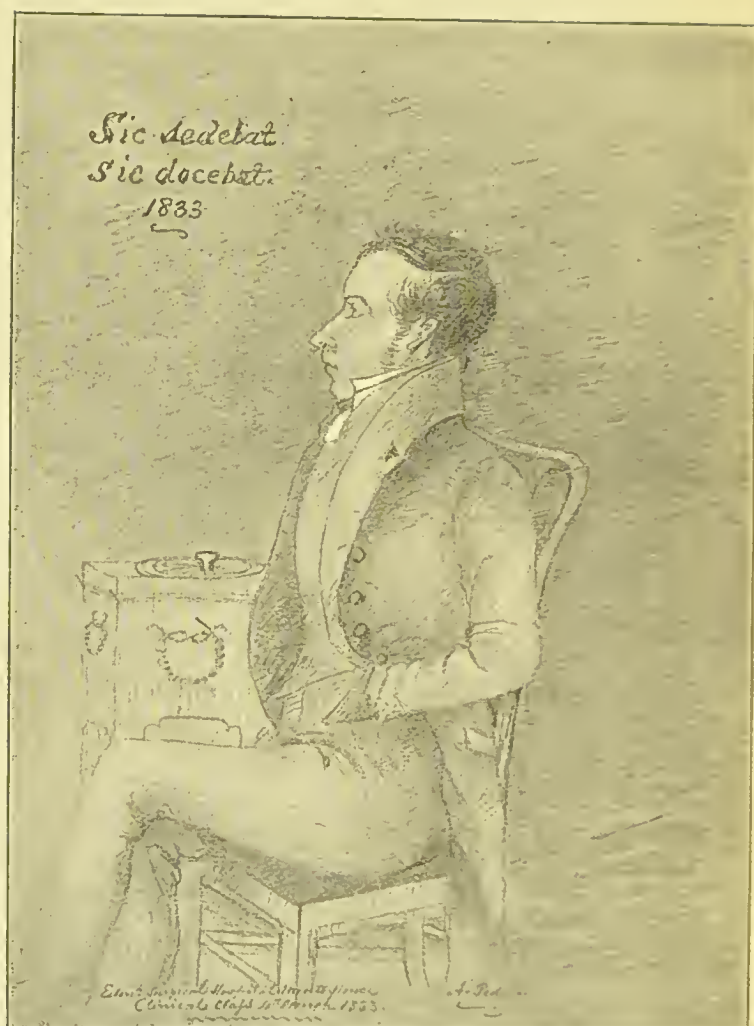
In the daily muster of apprentices<sup>1</sup> in the Minto House consulting-room before or after the hospital visit or lecture, I may notice that Mr. Syme, though at times moody, was in general lively, familiar, and in sympathy with us. Here we gave in our reports since the previous day, noticing any accident or interesting cases admitted or applying for admission; any amusing or exciting occurrence in the hospital, or outside in the dispensary practice, which was large; and frequently, as may be believed, there was no small amount of gossip or criticism indulged in concerning what was said or done at the infirmary by Liston, Lizars, and their partisans; for rival feelings were strong at that time, and keenly participated in by the enthusiastic apprentices, pupils, and friends of both parties. The apprentices of this period of the hospital were a good set of youths, industrious and enthusiastic in their profession: merry and companionable. Those with whom John

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the apprenticeship system in the Minto House days as given in the Harveian Address—reprinted in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal* of May 1890, pp. 1054, etc.—see Appendix No. III.



Brown and myself were most intimate were Robert Callender and James Wishart, especially the former, who was a connecting link with Theodore Martin,<sup>1</sup> who occasionally came about the hospital in those days. Callender was a youth of very considerable mental endowment, well up in his profession, witty, an accomplished botanist, a poet, a good musician—indeed, in every respect one fitted to be successful in his profession and to enjoy life; but he died in a few years of rapid consumption, his bright spirit passing away amid visions of heavenly glory, with expressions of divinest rapture on his lips. In a few years thereafter Dr. Wishart, also a man of sterling worth, who had established himself in a large general practice at Darlington, died of blood-poisoning contracted in the exercise of his profession. Very few remain to recall Mr. Syme in those early days in the Minto House class-room when delivering a systematic or clinical lecture: his slim figure in the unbecoming dress of the period; his slightly hesitating utterance, and somewhat muffled voice. But there was something attractive and impressive in his

<sup>1</sup> Now Sir Theodore Martin, K.C.B.



CLASS-ROOM SKETCH OF MR. SYME, 1833.

aspect; and his delivery was so serious and emphatic his style so clear, concise, and vigorous; and his exposition so distinguished by accurate description and diagnosis, practical common-sense observation, and consistence with physiological and pathological fact, that he was universally listened to with close attention and interest.

The description long afterwards by Dr. Brown of Syme meeting his house-surgeons, clerks, and dressers in the small consulting-room of the Royal Infirmary is a felicitous reproduction of what took place years before at Minto House with his assembled apprentices. ‘How delightful Syme was, standing with his back to the fire, making wise jokes—*jacula prudentis*—now abating a procacious youth, now heartening (encouraging) a shy, homely one, himself *haud ignarus*; giving his old stories of Dr. Gregory and Dr. Barclay. How the latter—who had been a “stickit minister,” was a capital teacher of anatomy and good sense—used to say to his students, “Gentlemen! Vesāālius and his fellows were the reapers in the great field of anatomy, John Hunter and his brethren were the

gleaners—and we,—gentlemen!—are the stubble geese!”’<sup>1</sup>

John Brown was acting as clerk in Minto House at the time I joined; and it was immediately afterwards that the incidents occurred which are so graphically and touchingly narrated by himself in the world-renowned story of *Rab and his Friends*. Here I may say in answer to the oft-put question, as to the fact or fiction of this most pathetic and artistic story, that Dr. Brown himself has settled it in the introduction to his kindly and philosophic paper, ‘Locke and Sydenham,’ by saying ‘that it is in all essentials strictly matter of fact.’ It was not written, or at least not published, until 1858, twenty-eight years after the incidents occurred; and from examination of the books of the hospital, and evidence elicited recently in correspondence, I have found the date of the occurrence to be December instead of ‘October’ 1830; and the names of the beautiful, sweet, and suffering ‘Ailie,’ and of her

<sup>1</sup> *Howe Subsecivæ*, ‘Mr. Syme,’ vol. i. p. 401. For more regarding Mr. Syme’s appearance and personal and professional character in subsequent years, see Appendix No. III.

practical, laconic, but true and tender-hearted husband, 'James Noble,' and of the country town 'Howgate'—of which he was said to be the carrier—to have been assumed for very obvious reasons. But of this touching story more anon.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after the incidents occurred on which the story of *Rab and his Friends* was founded, John began to do less in the hospital. He had served ably and faithfully in it, and his term of indenture was nearly at an end, while there were several other apprentices eager and able to carry on the work. Besides, it was quite evident that he was not fascinated by the excitement of operative practice; and as these were not the days of chloroform or any anæsthetic, his intensely sympathetic and sensitive nature seemed to recoil from the painful scenes of surgery. Moreover, it was obvious that the current of his thoughts and tastes was running more in the grooves of literature, while if he pursued the profession of medicine it would be as a physician rather than a surgeon. However, he continued for some time to visit the hospital, generally with a volume of Southey,

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 86-89.

Coleridge, Scott, Wordsworth, or other distinguished author under his arm, until the summer of 1832, when he was induced to accept an assistant's place with Dr. Martin of Chatham. For a year John was there engaged in a large amount of general practice; and a story is told of him which showed his true goodness of heart and self-sacrificing devotion to duty. Cholera, during its first invasion in this country, having broken out with great virulence in that town and district, the panic became so great that in the case of a very poor woman no one would approach her to render the aid she needed. The young assistant, however, did this, and it happened that, overcome by continued efforts to save her, he was found at last fast asleep at the bedside, while she had entered on her eternal rest.

Another interesting anecdote is told by Dean Hole of Rochester<sup>1</sup> of the young surgeon during the same epidemic. Early one morning John was called to a village three miles down the river to a place where the disease had broken out with great fury. On nearing the place of landing he saw a crowd of men and women awaiting his arrival. 'They were all

<sup>1</sup> 'The Memories of Dean Hole,' pp. 99-100. (Arnold, 1892.)

shouting for him, the shrill cries of the women and the deep voices of the men coming to him over the water. As the boat drew near the shore an elderly but powerful man forced his way through the crowd, plunged into the sea, and seized John Brown and carried him ashore. Then grasping him with the left hand, and thrusting aside with the right all that opposed his progress, he hurried him with an irresistible force to a cottage near. It was "Big Joe" in his determination that the doctor's first patient should be his grandson, "Little Joe," convulsed with cholera. The boy got better, but "Big Joe" died that night. The disease was on him when he carried the doctor from the boat; and when his wonderful love for the child, supreme over all else, had fulfilled its purpose, he collapsed and died.'

John returned to Edinburgh in 1833, where he took his degree of M.D., and soon thereafter began general practice. Having been one of his first patients, I have good reason gratefully to remember his kind care and skill in attending me many days and nights under a severe attack of typhus fever. Two years after that period circumstances occurred



which renewed our connection with Mr. Syme in the reorganisation of Minto House as a *private hospital* and public dispensary—which was carried on for the next fifteen years.<sup>1</sup>

Though ten years have passed since Dr. Brown was removed from our midst, his personal appearance and remarkable individuality must be well remembered by many who read these pages. His large and beautifully formed head and forehead, his silver locks, penetrating yet soft and sympathetic spectacled eyes; his firm but sweetly sensitive mouth, and his singularly genial and attractive manners, were too well marked to escape notice or to be soon forgotten. As age advanced beyond the Minto House days, his literary productions began to attract and charm the public mind, and his intercourse with his fellow-men became more fascinating, only interrupted at times, when natural brightness was overshadowed by clouds of despondency and self-depreciation, the exciting cause of which was generally some family affliction, or the suffering or death of a patient or intimate friend,

<sup>1</sup> For particulars regarding this Institution, see Appendix No. IV.



touching his keenly sensitive and spiritual nature. On these occasions his condition assumed the form of



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH IN 1866.

religious melancholy, by no means uncommon in persons of fine intellect, and having the deepest impressions of divine things. It was thus in the case

of Wordsworth, so beautifully analysed and expressed by the poet :

‘Or, if the mind turn inwards, ’tis perplexed,  
Lost in a gloom of uninspired research ;  
Meanwhile, the heart within the heart, the seat  
Where peace and happy consciousness should dwell,  
On its own axis restlessly revolves,  
Yet nowhere finds the cheering light of truth.’<sup>1</sup>

Several photographs were taken of him at different periods of his life, the best of which were those by Moffat of Edinburgh and Fergus of Largs, one by the former, in December 1880, being in company with myself and my old terrier ‘Dandie.’<sup>2</sup> Of portraits, the most successful was that painted in 1880 for J. Irvine Smith, Esq., by George Reid, R.S.A., now Sir George Reid, President of the Royal Scottish Academy. This has lately been generously presented by Mr. Smith to our National Portrait Gallery. There is also a fine bust in marble, by Cauer, a German artist, now in the possession of Dr. Brown’s son.

Shortly after commencing practice in Edinburgh,

<sup>1</sup> *The Excursion*, Book iv.

<sup>2</sup> See page 40.

Dr. Brown left his father's house and resided in 35 London Street. In 1844 he removed to 51 Albany Street; and on the 13th of June 1850 he came to 23 Rutland Street, in which he remained until carried to his last resting-place.

It was on June 4th, 1840, that Dr. Brown was married to Catherine Scott M'Kay, daughter of an Edinburgh gentleman. The attachment was one of long standing, and of pure admiration and affection. She was singularly beautiful, while possessing other attractions; and during the twenty-four years of their married life, his devotion to her was unvarying. Of their three children a son only survives. Mrs. Brown's last illness was unspeakably trying to her husband's loving and sensitive nature, and unquestionably was the exciting cause of much of the bodily and mental troubles which afflicted him during later years. The depth of his attachment was well known to all his intimate friends; and during her long illness and after her decease—which took place on the 6th of January 1864—his feelings of intense love and grief were touchingly poured forth in letters to a few friends; but these precious relics are

too sacred to be made public. Dr. Brown did not marry again, but his domestic comfort was well cared for during the remainder of life by having his sister Isabella as his companion and housekeeper, one who sympathised with all his feelings, tastes, and interests, whose character and habits have been so delightfully portrayed by Miss M'Laren in her *Outlines*.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after Mrs. Brown's death Mrs. Logan, wife of Alexander Logan, Advocate,<sup>2</sup> sent to Dr. Brown the following letter, which, unknown to him, had been written by Mrs. Brown to Mrs. Logan on hearing of the death of a much-loved child :—

BURNTISLAND, 14th Sept. 1842.

MY DEAR MRS. LOGAN,—From a letter I had this morning from Dr. John, I have learned the sad, sad news that your dear James is gone. I feel as if I could not help writing a few words to you, just to tell how very much, how with my whole heart I sympathise with you, my dear friend. None but a mother can know a mother's sorrow; and yet what can I say to you? If I saw you, I could only sit down and weep beside you. None but God who has stricken you can comfort you; I pray that His

<sup>1</sup> *Dr. John Brown and his Sister Isabella, Outlines*, by E. T. M'L. Edinburgh, David Douglas, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards Sheriff of Forfarshire, and throughout life a fast friend of Dr. Brown.

consolations may abound towards you, and that you may be made to feel, and to know more than ever, that wonderful love of God which passeth all knowledge. What a mercy it is that, when we go to Him in our time of distress, we have no need of words; we have only to throw ourselves at His feet! He knows all that we cannot express.

Dear, dear little James, the meek and gentle one! but think, dear Mrs. Logan, how happy he now is, and what an escape he has made from all the pain and distress which have so long afflicted him, and which never can come near him more!

I have often thought, when full of fears lest my own Helen should be taken from me, that if we only could love our children without a reference to self, we would not grieve when they died in infancy, because at no future time of their lives can we be so sure of their eternal happiness; but oh! when the hour of bereavement actually comes, these thoughts have but little weight.

I know how you must feel—how desolate, how bereaved, as if you had nothing now that could fill up your time and thoughts! Try to think of all the mercies you have yet left you. If I have said anything to hurt you, anything that you wish I had not said, will you forgive me?—it was far from my thoughts to do so. Will you present my kind regards to Mr. Logan—you are both constantly on my mind. That God may bless you, my dear Mrs. Logan, and make *all* things work for your everlasting good, is the prayer of your true friend,

CATHERINE S. BROWN.

So deeply touched was Dr. Brown on seeing this letter after the lapse of so many years—showing as it did his loved one's warmth of heart and soundness of faith—that he acknowledged it thus :

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I shall never cease to be grateful to God, to you, and to my darling, for this letter.

J. BROWN.

*March 17th, 1864.*

And so strongly did he seem to have been impressed by the letter, that he printed it for private circulation along with the following one of consolation which he had received immediately after Mrs. Brown's death, from Mr. Erskine of Linlathen, a man whom he greatly loved and esteemed :—

3 CHARLOTTE SQUARE,  
*7th January 1864.*

YES, MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am sure you are nothing but grateful to God for her release. *He* had His own will and loving purpose in detaining her here so long, in that state of mind which He had permitted and appointed, and she and you will doubtless one day know and rejoice in the accomplished effect of that purpose ; but we can without hesitation acknowledge the mercy of her deliverance. What a blessed and glorious thing human existence would be if we fully realised that the infinitely wise and

infinitely powerful God loves each one of us with an intensity infinitely beyond what the most fervid human spirit ever felt towards another, and with a concentration as if He had none else to think of! It is to His hands you have to trust her, and it is in His hands that she now is, always has been, and always will be. And this love has brought us into being, just that we might be taught to enter into *full sympathy* with Him, receiving His—giving our own—thus entering into the joy of our Lord. This is the hope—the sure and certain hope—set before us—sure and certain—for ‘the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.’

I always hope to be a better man by anything of the kind I hear—more free from the bondage of corruption, selfishness, and seen things, and more thoroughly possessed with the conviction that at every step in the journey of life I have the opportunity given me of being a fellow-worker with God in working out this great salvation.—  
Ever affectionately yours,

T. ERSKINE.

In 1847 Dr. Brown became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and for some time acted as its Honorary Librarian. Otherwise he took no active part in its business, and even absented himself from its meetings soon after the heated struggles in the



College between the Corporation and the University party in 1857, 1858, and 1859, he being a staunch partisan of the latter, believing that the conferring of degrees was the proper function of a University, and that Licensing by the Corporations, sanctioned by Government, was a mistake. In 1859 Dr. Brown was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh; and as a proof of the high estimation in which he was held as a man of letters and physician, he was, in 1861 and 1862, chosen by Mr. Gladstone, the then Rector of the University of Edinburgh, as his Assessor, during the double term of his office; and as a still higher honour, on the 22d April 1874, that University conferred on him the title of LL.D. In the same year a more national honour was bestowed on him, under Mr. Disraeli's Premiership, by a royal pension grant of £100 per annum for 'distinguished literary eminence.'

Having attained a position so distinguished and honoured, the most of men would have cultivated the advantages gained, and come more to the front as a public character. But Dr. Brown was too diffident and self-depreciating, and therefore shrank from that kind of notoriety. He disliked all public appearances;



and although his pen was swift in the expression of true genius, and while he was always so ready and interesting in conversation, he did not possess the gift of extemporaneous speaking, or at least shunned every occasion on which there was the possibility of being called on to make a speech in public. Nothing perturbed him more than the apprehension, even, of being expected to return thanks for the toast of his health at a public dinner. I remember one occasion on which he was forced to perform that duty, and all that he was able to give utterance to, was, 'Gentlemen (a pause) I thank you kindly (pause) for your kindness;' and then sat down amid laughter and applause.

In social intercourse he was not at all forward to express his opinions on medical and general politics, although his mind was decided in regard to them. Like his father, he was a staunch Liberal and Voluntary, clear and strong regarding religious equality, and opposed to all Church and State connection. When the question was first agitated as to Voluntaryism, he wrote: 'We have as little right to judge of what the Voluntary principle can and will do by what it has

done, as we have, from knowing the power and properties of water in liquidity, to judge and predicate its powers when converted into steam. As is the weight and force of a drop of water to that drop when converted into steam and compressed and set a-working, so is what society is doing to what it may and can do.' But on these debatable subjects he avoided public discussion, although in private correspondence he did not hesitate to state his mind freely. Thus, in 1864, referring to a lecture by the late Sir David Brewster, he wrote to a friend:—

MY DEAR FRIEND,— . . . We all admired the vigour and the beauty of his address, though I entirely dissent from his doctrine of the State rewarding Philosophers. I think all the State is bound, and indeed is capable to do, is to assert its right of dominion over land, and to restrain and regulate the physical force of the people. Religion, education, philosophy, pictures, etc., etc., etc., are all things out of and above its scope of action. They belong to society proper,—a paradisiac community set agoing before man needed to be governed by anything but the love of his Maker. Society is physiological, Government is pathological; armies and navies, policemen and prisons, belong to Government; knowledge, the culture of God and His works, the upholding of all that is pristine, and

lovely, and eternal, in man's nature, belong to society :  
There now ! there's a bit of heresy for you !—Ever yours,

J. B.

These views of the functions of the State and of society were held by him to the last ; but he did not parade them publicly.

The most marked characteristics of Dr. Brown's life and work were personality and spirituality. These are strikingly conspicuous in his various published writings, his private life and correspondence, and also in social intercourse and relations.

His personality impressed all who knew him with a peculiar charm. His expressive countenance—as already noticed ; the keen gaze through or over his tortoise-shell spectacles ; the persuasive tones of his voice ; his ready perception of peculiarities in persons and things ; his currents of thought, human sympathies, social affinities, easy style of humour, and quick insight and subtle analysis of character, were all highly individualistic. In the thoroughfares of our city he seemed to know or to be known by almost every one. When in good spirits he had a smile or nod for one, a passing quaint remark or joke for



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY FERGUS, LARGES, 1871

another, an amusing criticism on an article of dress or ornament displayed by a third, or to others ready and happily expressed words of recognition, congratulation, encouragement, or sympathy, as occasion and circumstances suggested. And in the case of canine passers by—for he had many such familiar friends—he had a pat on the head, or some commendation or criticism to bestow; and if they were strangers, he manifested an interest in their ownership, breeding, intelligence, or comicality—especially if terriers—of whom he has spoken as ‘those affectionate, great-hearted little ruffians!’ For dogs in general he had a well-known love, and though bitten severely by a dog when a child, he has told us that he had ‘remained “bitten” ever since in the matter of dogs.’<sup>1</sup> In fact, he became quite an authority regarding the breeding of dogs, their ‘points’ of excellence and value; and as a good judge his opinion was often asked before a purchase was made; and not infrequently also was he requested by intimate friends to secure for them a dog of the kind they were anxious to possess. Thus on one occasion, John, in

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Subsecivæ*, Series ii. p. 181.

a happy and playful mood, wrote the following note with sketch, of which I give a facsimile, to show the character of his handwriting, and how, with a few rapid touches of his pen, he could convey an accurate idea of dog-life:—

19th Jany. 1847.

Cone Case.

Thun has just walked  
into my room a brisk, hard  
some little Highland Fox  
tenier - & cocking his long  
knowing ear he says  
says he, "am I the thing for  
Dick?". You are says I.  
You vice says I. One Pound  
vice says he.  
He is really a very fine  
& a very original looking



dog. Game & a capital  
watcher. His only vice  
being a passion for Cat-  
killing . . .

. . . . .

He is a very poor dog &  
wrote the money. Do you  
want him? If so, let me  
know.

How are you? I am well.  
I am well. I am well.  
I am well. I am well.  
I am well. I am well.  
I am well. I am well.

in pectus too?.

Longer is the beginning 2.  
 And John's Book I am  
 afraid there is some  
 clerical about the Endowment  
 & the Papers in the Wind  
 Book I suppose is for it - a  
 well as the plucky  
 Little Sun - If so they are  
 damned politically -  
 As you to be in New  
 England? . Now do anti

Yours  
 J.B.





This is Gun Dog.  
Yekepi

WASP



16



DANDIE AND HIS FRIENDS. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY MOFFAT, 1880.

He understood dogs well, and they seemed to understand him. He had a high appreciation of their intelligence. Of Professor Veitch's dog 'Birnie' he wrote on one occasion thus: 'Don't let Bob (a bull-terrier) fall out with him: Birnie is too intellectual and gentlemanly righteous not to do everything consistent with his character to avoid a combat.' Of our sagacious 'Dandie' he used to say, 'he must have been a Covenanter in a former state,' and that he knew only one dog superior to him.

Dr. Maclagan, acting as 'promoter' at the University Graduation when Dr. Brown had the degree of LL.D. conferred on him, having spoken of Dr. Brown's much revered father, and eulogised in eloquent terms John's literary merits, professional attainments, and other qualities, not forgetting 'his love and appreciative regard for man's trusted, faithful, brave, and adoring companion, the dog,' received next evening the following note:—

23 RUTLAND STREET, 23d April 1874.

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,—I am in need of a course of humbling powders. I never thought so much of myself,—and you have much to answer for. Thanks for all you

said and felt, and not least for the word about my father. As to the others—*omne tulisti punctum*—it was perfect, from the blue bonnet over the border<sup>1</sup> to that bit from Burns. You have a curious felicity in these things, and you put infinitely more spirit into the *promotion* than hitherto. If Faust<sup>2</sup> had got a *D.D.* as Dog of Dogs, the thing would have been pluperfect.—Yrs. and his Mistress's ever,

J. B.

The loss of a dog is thus mourned over by Dr. Brown:—

23 RUTLAND STREET, *May 18th, 1857.*

MY DEAR C.,<sup>3</sup>—I have been told to-day that you have lost Wamba. I know too well what this is to think it anything less than a great sorrow. I would not like to tell anybody how much I have felt in like circumstances: the love of the dumb, unfailing, happy friend is so true, so to be depended on; is so free of what taints much of human love, that the loss of it ought never to be made light of. Had he been unwell for some time? He was not old enough to die of age. We have one such, and I do not know what I would do were he to die. . . . —Ever yours,

J. B.

<sup>1</sup> In reference to the Duke of Buccleuch, on whom the honour of LL.D. was conferred at the same time.

<sup>2</sup> Faust was a handsome retriever belonging to Miss Maelagan.

This letter, and several of the letters in the following pages (a selection from a large correspondence), were to Andrew Coventry

Dr. Brown might have said much more of his own dog 'Puck,'<sup>1</sup> than he has done in his admirable paper on 'Our Dogs.' In a letter telling of Puck's arrest by a policeman for not having on a municipal muzzle, he reasons thus: 'Puck in ten minutes would have been in the next world, *and why not? Placide quiescas!*' This recalls a remark he made to a friend, 'I have just met a deeply conscientious dog. He was carrying his own muzzle!' Indeed, Dr. Brown saw in many dogs the existence not only of a remarkable degree of the higher faculties, but of something akin to moral feelings; and in regard to Puck he spoke of him as 'a fellow of infinite

Dick, advocate, for many years resident Sheriff of Bute. It was to him that Dr. Brown in 1861 dedicated the second volume of the *Horæ Subsecivæ*, along with Mr. Gladstone, Thackeray, and Ruskin; and of him, in the last volume of the *Horæ Subsecivæ*, he wrote in a prefatory notice to verses by 'E.V.K. to his Friend in town,' the following warm tribute *in memoriam*: 'He was a man of the finest gifts, culture, and affections, who, had his life not been maimed by long years of shattered health, bringing languor and suffering not to be recalled even now without pain and wonder, would have risen to the highest honours in his profession, and enriched literature with his wise and lively thoughts.' With him Dr. Brown carried on much correspondence from 1842 until 1870, in which year the Sheriff died.

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Subsecivæ*, vol. ii. pp. 210, 211.

human affections.' There are certainly dogs and dogs, as there are men endued with higher or lower degrees of intelligence and sensitive natures; but there is that in many a dog which makes him a fit companion for man, while, as Bacon has it, and Burns quoted it, 'Man is the god of the dog.' 'It would be well for man'—as the author of 'Rab' says—'if his worship were as immediate and instinctive—as absolute as the dog's.'

The description of 'Toby,' another of his dogs, is deliciously graphic, and I cannot resist quoting from it largely.<sup>1</sup> 'Toby was the most utterly shabby, vulgar, mean-looking cur I ever beheld: in one word, *a tyke*.' John's brother William—deceased some years—saved Toby, it appears, from being drowned by some boys in Lochend; and with the connivance of the cook the two brothers concealed him in the house for some weeks from 'our excellent and Rhadamanthine grandmother, whose love of tidiness and hatred of dogs and dirt would have expelled him. However, one night Toby walked into my father's bedroom, when he was bathing his

<sup>1</sup> *Howe Subscivæ*: 'Our Dogs,' vol. ii. pp. 182, 183.



feet, and introduced himself with a wag of his tail, intimating a general willingness to be happy. On this my father gave such an unwonted shout of laughter that we, grandmother, sisters, and all of us, went in. And thus Toby's tongue and fun proved too much for grandmother's eloquence. I somehow think that Toby must have been up to all this, for I think he had a peculiar love for my father ever after, and regarded grandmother from that time with a careful and cool eye.' All this was said of Toby when young. 'When full-grown he was a strong, coarse dog, coarse in shape, in countenance, in hair, and in manner. I used to think that according to the Pythagorean doctrine, he must have been, or going to be, a Gilmerton carter. He was of the bull-terrier variety, coarsened through much mongrelism, and a dubious and varied ancestry. His teeth were good, and he had a large skull, and the rich bark of a dog three times his size, and a tail which I never saw equalled—indeed, it was a tail *per se*; it was of immense girth and not short, equal throughout like a policeman's baton, the machinery for working it of great power, and acted in a way, as far as I

have been able to discover, quite original. We called it his ruler. Toby, however, with all this inbred vulgar appearance, was a dog of great moral excellence—affectionate, faithful, honest up to his light, with an odd humour as peculiar and strong as his tail. My father, in his reserved way, was very fond of him, and there must have been very funny scenes with them, for we heard bursts of laughter issuing from his study when they two were by themselves; there was something in him that took that grand, beautiful, melancholy face. One can fancy him in the midst of his books, and sacred work and thoughts, pausing and looking at the secular Toby, who was looking out for a smile to begin his rough fun, and about to end by coursing and *gurrin'* round the room, upsetting my father's books laid out on the floor for consultation, and himself nearly at times, as he stood watching him, and off his guard and shaking with laughter.'

It has been well and truly said of John Brown that 'he has written of dogs with as great fidelity and intuition as Landseer has painted them.' The portrait of Rab himself—a full-length one—is most characteristic of the limner. 'Rab was a dog of which



there is none such now—one of a lost tribe; brindled and grey like Rubislaw granite; hair short, hard, and close like a lion's; body thick-set like a little bull—a sort of compressed Hercules; having a large, blunt head, and a bud of a tail; a muzzle black as night; his mouth blacker than any night; a tooth or two gleaming out of his jaws of darkness. His head, scarred with the records of old wounds, one eye out, one ear cropped as close as was Archbishop Leighton's father's; the remaining eye had the power of two, and above it, and in constant communication with it, was a tattered rag of an ear, which was for ever unfurling itself like an old flag; and then that bud of a tail, about one inch long—if it could in any sense be called long, being as broad as long,—the mobility, the instantaneousness of that bud were very funny and surprising; and its expressive twinklings, the intercommunications between the eye, the ear, and it were of the oddest and swiftest. Rab had all the dignity and simplicity of great size; and having fought his way all along the road to absolute supremacy, he was as mighty in his own line as Julius Cæsar or the Duke of Wellington, and had the gravity of all great fighters,

or, as a Highland gamekeeper said of his dog, 'Oh, sir, his life's full of sairiousness; he just never can get eneuch o' fechtin'!'”<sup>1</sup>

John Brown's acquaintance with literature of all kinds—which he called 'fine confused feeding'—was very extensive; and this in society and at the social board, with his acuteness of observation on everything around him, his intelligence on most subjects under discussion, his remarkable fund of anecdote, his careful avoidance of that which might create unpleasant feeling, and the happy method of drawing persons out to tell what they knew, made his company delightful. On such occasions he was generally the centre of interest: but he shone brightest in the family circle, or with a few kindred spirits or familiar friends. From these qualities, with a unique combination of kindness and homeliness, tenderness and humour, John was not only beloved and admired by his immediate friends, but became the correspondent or associate of many of the most distinguished men of the

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Subsecivæ*, Series ii. pp. 374, 375.

day, such as Carlyle, Ruskin, Dean Stanley, Dean Hole, Sir Henry Taylor, Mr. Gladstone, Erskine of Linlathen, Sir James Clark, Thackeray, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Samuel Langhorne Clemens ('Mark Twain'), and Sir Theodore Martin; and nearer home of Sir George Harvey, Sir Noel Paton, Sir Robert Christison, Professors Aytoun, Blackie, Shairp, and Masson; the Rev. Drs. Hanna, Cairns, John Ker, Robertson of Irvine, Walter Smith, Mr. Thomas Constable, and many others—a roll now sadly diminished. Although John Brown's acquaintance was very large, his intimacy was by no means indiscriminate, for with all his simplicity of character he possessed a wonderfully searching power of observation; and as in cases of disease his diagnosis was rapid, so perception of character was as if intuitive. Thus likings and dislikings were formed generally at first sight, and these proved strong and enduring. Towards several of the above-mentioned men his attachment was very strong; perhaps most conspicuously so towards George Harvey and William Makepeace Thackeray.

The warm friendship with Sir George Harvey began at a very early period, as the letters to be

quoted hereafter will show; and lasted unbroken till his death in January 1876, which was to John the cause of profound sorrow.

With the author of *Vanity Fair* friendship dated, I believe, from the occasion of Thackeray's lectures in Edinburgh on *The English Humorists*,<sup>1</sup> after which time Dr. Brown held resolutely to the opinion that Thackeray's true character was much misunderstood by the general public. Indeed, he could not endure the comparisons frequently drawn between him and the rival novelist of the day. The following letter from Dr. Brown to his warmly attached friend, the late Andrew Coventry Dick, appears to have been written at this time:—

23 RUTLAND STREET,

(December 1851 or January 1852.)

MY DEAR COVENTRY,—I wish you had been here for the last fortnight to have seen, heard, and known Thackeray,—a fellow after your own heart,—a strong-headed, sound-hearted, judicious fellow, who knew the things that differ, and prefers Pope to Longfellow or Mrs. Barrett Browning, and Milton to Mr. Festus, and Sir Roger De Coverley to *Pickwick*, and David Hume's *History* to Sheriff Alisou's; and the 'verses by E. V. K. to his

<sup>1</sup> In 1851.

friend in town'<sup>1</sup> to anything he has seen for a long time; and 'the impassioned grape' to the whole works prosaic and poetical of Sir Bulwer Lytton. I have seen a great deal of him and talked with him on all sorts of things, and next to yourself I know no man so much to my mind. He is much better and greater than his works. His lectures have been very well attended, and I hope he will carry off £300. I wish he could have taken as much from Glasgow, but this has not been found possible. He was so curious about you after sending these verses, which he liked exceedingly. He is 6 feet 3 in height, with a broad kindly face and an immense skull. Do you remember Dr. Henderson of Galashiels? He is ludicrously like him,—the same big head and broad face, and his voice is very like, and the same nicety in expression and in the cadences of the voice. He makes no figure in company, except as very good-humoured, and by saying now and then a quietly strong thing. I so much wish you had met him. He is as much bigger than Dickens as a three-decker of 120 guns is bigger than a small steamer with *one* long-range swivel-gun. He has set everybody here a-reading *Stella's Journal*, *Gulliver*, *The Tatler*, *Joseph Andrews*, and *Humphrey Clinker*. He has a great turn for politics, right notions, and keen desires, and from his kind of head would make a good public man. He has much in him which cannot find issue in mere authorship.—  
Yours ever affectionately, J. B.

<sup>1</sup> Published in the *Horæ Subsecivæ*, Series iii. pp. 406-12.

Then when Thackeray lectured on *The Four Georges* in 1856, there is the following letter to the same friend, not dated, but probably in December of that year:—

23 RUTLAND STREET.

MY DEAR COVENTRY,—*Covissime omnium covorum et Carissime*. I wish you lived across the street, for then would not I drop in upon you as of old, and discuss the whole round of thoughts, and things, and men . . . Thackeray has been here and a great deal with us, and I like him more than ever,—he is so natural and unforced in his ways and talk. The lecture on George the III. was very noble . . . He made 2000 men and women weep by reading old Johnson's lines on poor Levett the surgeon . . . I had a small dinner on Monday to Thackeray, Edw. Maitland, Ld. Ardmillan, Blackie, Logan, Harvey, and D. O. Hill. We were very happy. Ardmillan is very likeable, Maitland<sup>1</sup> is loveable and abler. He is one of our foremost men now.—Yours ever, J. B.

In the beautiful *in memoriam* paper which Dr. Brown published, entitled 'Thackeray's Death,' he said: 'This is to us so great a personal as well as public calamity, that we feel little able to order our words aright, or to see through our blinding tears. Mr. Thackeray was so much greater, so much

<sup>1</sup> Late Lord Barcaple.

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nobler than his works, great and noble as they are, that it is difficult to speak of him without apparent excess. What a loss to the world the disappearance of that large, acute, and fine understanding; that searching, inevitable inner and outer eye; that keen and yet kindly satiric touch; that wonderful humour and play of soul! and then such a mastery of his mother tongue! such a style! such nicety of word and turn! such a flavour of speech! such genuine originality of genius and expression! such an insight into the hidden springs of human action! such a dissection of the nerves to their ultimate fibrillæ! such a sense and such a sympathy for the worth and for the misery of man! such a power of bringing human nature to its essence,—detecting at once its basic goodness and vileness, its compositeness!’ . . . . ‘It should never be forgotten that his specific gift was creative satire,—not caricature, nor even sarcasm, nor sentiment, nor romance, nor even character as such,—but the delicate satiric treatment of human nature in its most superficial aspects, as well as in its inner depths, by a great-hearted and tender and genuine sympathy, unsparing,



truthful, inevitable, but with love and the love of goodness and true loving-kindness, over-arching and indeed animating it all.' . . . 'This, with his truthfulness, his scorn of exaggeration in thought or word, and his wide, deep, loving sympathy for the entire round of human wants and miseries, goes far to make his works in the best, because in a practical sense, wholesome, moral, honest, and of "good report."'<sup>1</sup>

Again Dr. Brown wrote: 'We know no death in the world of letters since Macaulay's, which will make so many mourners,—for he was a faithful friend. No one, we believe, will ever know the amount of true kindness and help, given often at a time when kindness cost much, to nameless, unheard-of suffering, a man of spotless honour, of the strongest possible home affections and the most scrupulous truthfulness.'

In view of contributing an *in memoriam* notice in the *Scotsman*, and for the longer notice in the *Horæ Subsecivæ* from which the above passages are quoted, it appears that eight days after Thackeray's death<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Subsecivæ*, Series iii. pp. 179-80, 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> 24th December 1863.



Dr. Brown wrote the following letter to his old friend Theodore Martin, 31 Onslow Square, London :—

23 RUTLAND STREET,  
1st January 1864.

MY DEAR MARTIN,—Thanks for your letter. You will see part of it in the *Scotsman* : it was not my doing calling you ‘a literary man’—which to my ears is not so good as ‘a man of letters.’ It must have been a very sacred time. God grant we all get good by this, and indeed by everything ! for that, after all, is *the* thing. Are we better or worse now than we were a while ago ? Are we ripening or withering, or rotting ? I could answer for you and yours. . . . Can you tell me any one likely to be able and willing to tell me of Thackeray’s college and artist life ? . . .

Good-bye, my dear friends. Be thankful that you and yours are all in all to each other ; and that each has the other in some measure of health, and with reason untouched. Many a happy New Year’s day to you both !  
—Yours ever affectionately,

J. BROWN.

And also the following letter :—

23 RUTLAND STREET,  
11th February 1864.

MY DEAR THEODORE MARTIN,—I ought long ere now to have thanked you, for your most useful help, and to have asked your forgiveness for my importunity and for the using of your time. You will see on Saturday, I hope, how well Lancaster has put in your bit. The composite

notice is not what he and I would desire it to be ; but it is honest and affectionate, and I sent the latter part of it to Miss Thackeray and the mother, and they were pleased. . . . When you get the *North British*, I wish you especially to read the paper on 'Old Books,' and tell me what you think of it, and especially of the criticism on Dante's 'Great refusal.' It is by my cousin,—and the 'Thorn in the Flesh,'<sup>1</sup>—John Taylor Brown, who was at Arnott's<sup>2</sup> with us. There is a very touching little bit about Rousseau. Let me hear from you soon, and remember me to your *sine qua non*. I know more of her worth to you, now that I have lost mine.—Yours ever,  
J. BROWN.

Although for many years John Brown's society was much courted, and dining-out a very frequent occurrence, he did not in return entertain much at his own table. His style of living was plain, unassuming, and economical ; and when at the table of others he was moderate and careful. His enjoyment in company was not physieal but mental, either in quiet improving talk, or the flow of wit and soul. Indeed, the fascination, the attractive power, which his presence exercised over those who found him in good health

<sup>1</sup> Published in the *Horæ Subsecivæ*, edition 1858, pp. 101-27.

<sup>2</sup> Writing-school in Edinburgh.

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and spirits cannot well be described. The influence was something akin to the pleasure felt from the fragrance of freshest flowers, or the harmony of sweetest music. Even solid, sober-minded people felt this spell in his company. His sweetness of nature, which is so apparent throughout his writings, and has impressed the hearts of many readers, was doubly felt by familiar friends from his looks, words, and actions. To know him was to love him. Many must remember the charm of his presence, and the pleasure of seeing him at his house in Rutland Street. There, the earlier part of the afternoon was devoted to professional consultations. These were in his library, the walls of which were clothed with books and valuable engravings—which gave it an interesting aspect, although by himself it was spoken of to strangers as ‘the den, where I wait for my prey.’ But later in the day, and also in the evening, he was generally to be found in the drawing-room, seated in a low arm-chair; and strewed on the floor, or on a table by his side, lay the latest books and journals. This room was remarkable for the simplicity and comfort of its furnishings; here

also almost every inch of the wall was covered with paintings in oil or water colour, etchings, and pen and ink sketches, placed without regard to size, subject, or symmetrical hanging. These were mostly gifts from his old friends and patients, Sir George Harvey, Sir Noel Paton, David Scott, Duncan, Drummond, and many others: also from younger artists in whom he saw the stamp of dawning genius.

Here, too, he received the visits of many ladies, old and young, who were attracted to 'Dr. John,' as if by a magnet, and who eagerly conveyed to him the latest and most interesting news of passing events in the city and elsewhere, and of what concerned themselves or their friends. In general he was a patient listener to such visitors, while they left highly pleased, having culled from him opinions on the newest books or works of art; and gratified by the kindly interest manifested in their own affairs. For young men, also, with literary aspirations, he had always a kindly welcome; and they received from him much good advice and encouragement. His relations with them were exceptionally happy, and are thus recalled and recorded by one who had

experienced his friendly notice in early life: 'His advice and counsel were sought by scores of young Edinburgh artists and literary men, and seldom sought in vain, he having a felicitous gift of tendering advice, with the least possible appearance of preaching. It thus happened that a large proportion of his friends comprised men much younger than himself, to whose hopes and aspirations his quick penetration and large heart gave him a ready key. In his house in Rutland Street there was a little chamber, in which on periodical occasions he was at home to his friends, old and young. Here there was often much talk worth listening to, gossip and criticism of contemporary art, and *belles lettres*, mingled with a good store of racy anecdote and wholesome jest; the air growing gradually denser the while with the fragrant blue clouds of tobacco. In later years Dr. Brown could hardly be called a brilliant conversationalist, though in his earlier life he enjoyed that reputation. As an old man, his talk flowed on in a wise, kindly, part shrewd, part humorous fashion, in a low-pitched voice, marked by a slight note of the Doric. In addressing a

younger man, the word of counsel or cheer was often emphasised by the hand laid on the shoulder, like an elder brother's. He never sought to monopolise the talk, which some elders' claim as their privilege, but was a patient and sympathetic listener. In his judgments upon pictures and books he was often critical enough; but when he praised, he praised generously and unstintedly. He was not above prejudice too; had pet likes and dislikes in literature, but few crotchets, few perverse twists in his mental vision, and not a sour or a bitter spot in his whole nature. Those *Noctes* are still pleasantly remembered in Edinburgh literary art circles by those privileged to enjoy Dr. Brown's friendship.'<sup>1</sup>

His pleasure in the society of women and appreciation of womanly goodness was great; and their attraction to and admiration of him was sometimes almost idolatrous. Thus undoubtedly many a fee was obtained from persons captivated by the idylls of 'Rab and his Friends' and 'Pet Marjorie' desirous to see, shake hands, and enjoy the presence

<sup>1</sup> Article—'Dr. John Brown,' by Robert Richardson, B.A., *United Presbyterian Magazine*, January 1892, p. 7.

of the author, even for a brief interval, although not on account of any important illness affecting them. This kind of inspection and interviewing—when he happened to be somewhat low in spirits—was the reverse of agreeable to him. Very talkative women he could not endure. After speaking in a letter now before me, of a man who, in conversation, used with great frequency the conjunction *but*, he said:—

23 RUTLAND STREET,  
17th July 1861.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—That man with the ‘but’ is welcome to me, in spite of himself, for your sake, for then if he overflows too much, I can check him. But I couldn’t do that to a woman; so pray do not ask me to be civil to a loquacious woman; I like women to speak, and to speak a great deal—nothing, except sleep, becomes them better; but a *talking* woman is an awful judgment, and mystery, and oppression. . . . —Yours ever, J. B.

Dr. Brown’s heart, however, was drawn strongly out to those who, like himself, possessed a sympathetic and pathetic nature—quickly moved with pity for those in sorrow, while sympathetic with the joys of others, and especially with those who had in them a sense of wit and humour. We all know that



tears and laughter spring from the same source, or are readily excited in the same mental constitution; and it is equally observable that such individuals are strongly attracted to each other. This keen human sympathy, indeed, was the most powerful magnet in his friendships, and a bond of interest in professional relations. A lady, one of his patients, frequently inclined like himself to depression of spirits, told me that one day when they were walking together in the country and describing their respective feelings, he said, 'Tell me why am I like a Jew?' She could not answer, so he explained, 'Because I am Sad-you-see.' Thus he could even jest on the subject of his own affliction, and at a time when a dark band of cloud hung across his soul.

His interest in children is well known to have been great. He understood them well; and their innocent laughter and droll ways were delightful to him. He had always something funny to say or do to them, in order to excite laughter or wonder; to try their temper, or to draw forth natural peculiarities. Many now grown up to be men and women can recall his bewitching ways. I remember on one occasion he



gave a juvenile party, and opened the door himself attired as a high-class footman, and announced each party by the oddest fictitious names. This sort of joking was sometimes practised even in the company of older people with whom he was intimate. Thus, on the occasion of an evening party, at a time while a notable trial was in progress, and the talk of the assembled company was concerning it, the drawing-room door was thrown open and the waiter solemnly announced 'Major —— and his two wives,' when, after a few seconds of astonishment, Dr. Brown walked in with a lady on each arm. This practical joke proved the key-note of the party, which was a hilarious one during the remainder of the evening.

He was always kindly to friends, and courteous to strangers visiting him; and it was his invariable practice to see every one to the door on leaving, sending them away with a happy remark, sometimes a practical joke, and in every case with a pleasing, often an ecstatic, remembrance of the visit.

Then in correspondence with intimate juvenile friends, or when calling on some one who happened to be from home, he would, in the former case send

and in the latter case, leave a humorous note sometimes signed JEYE BEE, in fancy capital letters

JEYE BEE

often with an artistic pen-and-ink sketch, not unworthy of a Leech, Doyle, or Furniss. These represented, it might be, a man with a small forehead,



long nose, a stick leg, and hands in the side pockets of a pea-jacket; or a shaggy-coated terrier in a remark-

able attitude; or some other equally grotesque figure. Sometimes his letters to young friends were of a more carefully prepared character and in a style which nobody but himself could have achieved. The following is an example, so clever, so humorous, so playful, and pawkily satirical, that I cannot resist giving it here:—

*NUMERI LEGE SOLUTI:*

BEING LAWLESS NUMBERS ON SEEING A DUCK ON  
THE PITLOCHRY ROAD, SEPTEMBER 12, 1874.

*‘White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely queer.’*

DEDICATED TO E. AND N.

A DUCK stood on the road, it stood upon one leg,  
Its bill it was sunk in its feathers, its eye it was black and gleg,<sup>1</sup>  
I stared at it—it stared at me, that eye round and unwinking,  
I could not but wonder a little, what it and its mistress were  
thinking.

She took small heed of my eye, but she stretched out her No. 2  
leg,

As if to show me she had one, and then most humbly to beg,  
That I would believe her—

And leave her.

Then under her wing she tucked No. 2, this queer and well-  
balanced aquatic,

This tucking, from Huxley you know, it was due to the force  
‘automatic,’

<sup>1</sup> Scottish for lively.

It was perfectly firm, that one leg, bright saffron it was and  
web-footed,

And its web it took hold of the road, as if in it it were rooted.

To taking her portrait in pencil, she made not the slightest  
resistance,

So I drew her, while, purple and grey, Ben-y-Vrackie rose up in  
the distance.

The duck, she was white as the snow, her eye was as black as the berry  
Called black—and the round little thing had a blink you might  
safely call merry.

So farewell ! my squab little friend,

My sketch and our visit take end.

Ben-y-Vrackie is blue and is beautiful,

Thy ways they are lowly and dutiful.

Thou 'lt be eaten one day—and well tasted,

If properly stuffed, cooked, and basted.

My sketch being made, I departed,

She winked, dropt t'other foot, and, light-hearted,

Waddled off with her eye on a worm, which she gobbled up nimbly,  
my certie !

Gobbled up in the eourse of a twinkling,

And ne'er gave poor *vermis* an inkling.

A solemn, deep bird is your duck,

And well she deserved to be stuck

On the walls of Egyptian Memphis,<sup>1</sup>

As the type hieroglyphic of M.D.'s,

Who quack us, and cure us by quackery,

And all sorts of joukery-pawkery,<sup>2</sup>

And if you should chance to fall ill,

Your duck of a doctor—he sends in his bill !

Don't you think, my dear reader, in this advanced age,

Our Lady Doctors—dear Ducks ! should be well stuffed with sage.

<sup>1</sup> A *duck* is the hieroglyphic for a physician.

<sup>2</sup> Niece trickery.

And be our *Sages Femmes*, as 'tis over in Paris,  
And dethrone Sairy Gamp and her friend 'Mrs. Harris'?

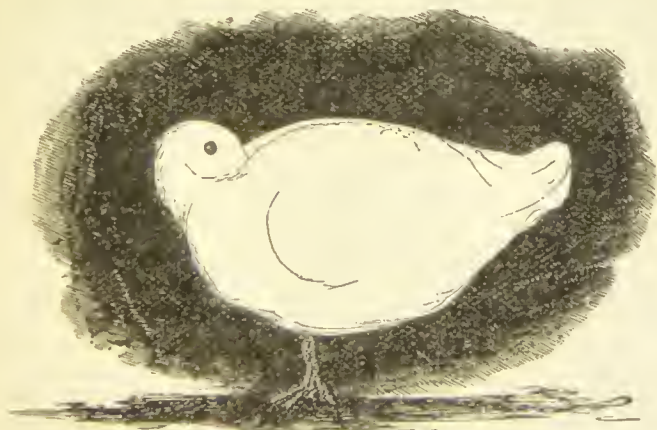
Past runs the sunlit Tummel, strong from his wilds above,  
Blue as 'the body of heaven'—shot like the neck of a dove,  
He is fresh from the moor of Rannoch, he has drained Loch Ericht  
dread,

And imaged on Carie's waters Ben-y-Houlach's stately head ;  
He has mourned round the graves of the Struans hid in the night  
of the wood,

And has laughed by the pleasant slope, where our old Dunalister  
stood.

Schiehallion has heard him chafing, down by his sunless steep,  
And has watched the child of the mountains, deep in his Loch  
asleep.

He's awake ! and off by Bonskeid, he has leapt his Falls with glee,  
He has married the Garry below, and they linger in Faskally,  
Then down by dear Moulin of Earn, and on to our Duck and me !



With JEYEE BEE'S ancient love.

23 RUTLAND STREET, 23d October 1874.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Copies of these lines were printed by Dr. Brown and sent at the time to several of his intimate friends.

These grotesque verses of 'The Duck' show in Dr. Brown not merely a rich vein of naïve humour, but no small amount of poetic fancy and rhyming power. It has always been a matter of surprise to me, judging from the general character of his papers, in which there is the expression of so much that is pure and beautiful—the material elements of genuine poetry; and considering, too, that he wrote such articles as 'Henry Vaughan' and 'Arthur Hallam,' and is known to have dipped deeply into the works of the ancient classical poets, as also those of Wordsworth, Cowper, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Scott, Byron, Tennyson,<sup>1</sup> and others, that he did not himself court the influence of the muse; for I am not aware that any higher flight than that of 'The Duck' was attempted by him. Indeed, his warm friend Sir Noel Paton told me that many years ago, when talking with him regarding the art of metrical composition, John said, 'I have never been able to comprehend how any one could

<sup>1</sup> I find in some letters of 1849 and 1850 that Dr. Brown had written in high admiration of Tennyson's early poems, such as *The Miller's Daughter*, *Enone*, *Love and Death*, *Dora*, *In Memoriam*, etc., and rates some critics of that period who treated the poet with faint praise.

give expression to coherent thought under the trammels of metre and rhyme,' and added, with his little laugh, 'the only *poetry* I ever produced was four lines:—

‘My eyes are blind with childish tears ;  
My teeth with age are green ;  
I’m utterly rumfooz-el-ed,  
And not what I have been !’

These reminiscences of Dr. Brown may possibly be regarded by some as trivial ; but such details serve as side-lights, bringing before the mind a true ideal of the man. They show an amount of youthful freshness and an elastic character of mind which enabled him to converse on subjects learned and profound, to write philosophically and seriously, and to mix in society with men of high rank or great intellect ; while he could accommodate himself to those of inferior age, position, or mental endowment, and by pen or otherwise promote innocent hilarity and enjoyment.

A relative has justly said of Dr. Brown’s intercourse equally with high and low :—‘ Most men in their intercourse with their fellows use certain current phrases,



useful counters of speech, which mean something or nothing, as the case may be, which we keep in our pocket, and hand out one or two as occasion seems to require. He had none of these. His commonest remark to the porter who took his portmanteau at the station, or to the cabman who drove him home, to every one with whom he came in contact, was fresh and original, made there and then, fitted to the occasion, and felt like a breath of fresh air. All natural and unaffected human beings were at once at home with him, and even the most artificial prigs gradually thawed in his presence.’<sup>1</sup> Besides, there was in Dr. Brown great simplicity and humility of character, and a homeliness of speech and manner most refreshing, which even in the presence of distinguished personages was unaltered. His humour was of a truly Scotch type, shrewd, and what may be spoken of as *pawky*, having in it an amiable and innocent degree of sarcasm. His humorous or jocular remarks were never premeditated, laboured, or dragged into notice, but quick emanations of the mind from passing

<sup>1</sup> *In Memoriam* notice, *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, June 1882, p. 1133.



circumstances, always spontaneous, fresh, and natural. The ready way in which he drew on a rich store of anecdote, and the humorous point which he gave to it in conversation, was as attractive as any genuinely spontaneous witticism.

Dr. Brown's literary work, from his earliest to his latest writings, bears the stamp of genuine personality. His first important effort was put forth in 1846, when Hugh Miller, the distinguished geologist and gifted author of *The Old Red Sandstone*, the *Testimony of the Rocks*, and other works, and the then editor of the *Witness* newspaper, sent to him a £20 note, with the request that he would contribute to that paper notices of the paintings then being exhibited by the Royal Scottish Academy,—hearing, doubtless, that he was enthusiastic regarding works of art. This request was received with astonishment, both because he had no acquaintance with Miller at that time, and had not before written for the press. His first thought, therefore, was, as he states in the article afterwards published—‘Notes on Art’<sup>1</sup>—to

<sup>1</sup> *Hours Subsecivæ*, vol. ii. p. 216.

decline the request, 'had not my *sine qua non*, with wife-like government, retentive and peremptory, kept the money and heartened me.' In saying that he had not written for the press, Dr. Brown does not appear to have considered as important several contributions to the *Scotsman* on works of art, passing events, and various matters touching the amenity of the city.<sup>1</sup> Unquestionably, therefore, it was the editor of the latter paper who nursed his dawning genius, thus drawing the attention of the rival editor to his rare literary and critical ability, and creating a desire to secure his services for the columns of the *Witness*. I need not say how admirably the imposed task for the *Witness* was performed. The paintings in that exhibition were certainly of rare quality, and no such critical notices of our annual Academy displays have since appeared: they were indeed remarkable as word-pictures.<sup>2</sup>

John only needed this beginning of authorship to

<sup>1</sup> At a later period he wrote those letters on proposed alterations on the Castle and the Castle Rock, under the *nom de plume* of 'Randolph'—which attracted much public notice.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted, *Horæ Subsecivæ*, series ii., pp. 233-93.

discover his power to write attractively for the public mind and heart; and, encouraged by the universal praise which these notices called forth, he contributed to the *North British Review*, in the following year, an able article on Ruskin's *Modern Painters*.<sup>1</sup> And now the accumulated knowledge of past years, cultivated taste in ancient classics, in philosophy, general literature, science and art; keen observation of men and manners—of things great and small; of sympathy with all that is good, noble, and natural in humanity, and appreciation of all that is beautiful in nature and art, were no longer restrainable. Like a stream, his thoughts—sometimes deep, smooth, and solemn, sometimes rapid, lively, and sparkling—continued to flow from his pen for upwards of thirty years in papers on a variety of subjects, only interrupted by intervals of delicate health. These were published from time to time as contributions to the *Scotsman* and various periodicals. His papers were on two occasions collected in separate volumes under the title of *Hours Subseiva*, of which there have been several editions published here

<sup>1</sup> *North British Review*, vol. vi., February 1847, pp. 401-30.

and in America; and nearly all his writings were brought together and published in three volumes under the same title in 1882, almost coincidentally with his decease. Dr. Brown used to speak of the title *Horæ Subsecivæ* as being somewhat priggish; and told the story of a lady having once asked at a country library for Dr. Brown's *Horrors of Society*! He himself called them 'Bye-Hours,' from the papers having been written at times when not occupied in professional work.

In the *Horæ Subsecivæ* published in 1858 there is the following curiously worded dedication:—

TO MY TWO FRIENDS  
AT BUSBY, RENFREWSHIRE,  
IN REMEMBRANCE OF A JOURNEY FROM CARSTAIRS JUNCTION  
TO TOLEDO AND BACK,  
THE STORY OF 'RAB AND HIS FRIENDS' IS INSCRIBED.

TO THE MEMORY OF  
JAMES ABERCROMBY, FIRST BARON DUNFERMLINE,  
AND TO MY FATHER'S,  
IS DEDICATED  
WHAT OF MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL TRUTH  
IS IN THESE BYE-HOURS.

The dedication in the second volume or series published in (1861), is

To  
THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE,  
M.P., D.C.L., LL.D.,  
RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
FROM HIS  
ASSESSOR.

ANDREW COVENTRY DICK,  
WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY,  
AND  
JOHN RUSKIN  
FROM THEIR OLD  
FRIEND.

Some have regretted that Dr. Brown's name has not been connected with any large work, instead of merely fugitive or fragmentary pieces, which are in danger of being ere long shelved and forgotten. His health, however, was never so stable, nor character of mind so plodding, as to fit him for prolonged study or sustained effort; but it may be averred that, like the miscellaneous pieces of many of our best writers both in prose and verse, these short leisure hour effusions have it in them to impress the mind and eling longer in the memory than productions of

a more ambitious character. In a note taken somewhere from the *Eclectic Review*, it is said 'a man can scarcely hope for immortality by possessing the name of John Brown, but he may walk down to posterity with tolerable individuality by the epithet of *Subsecivæ* Brown!'

All that he did write was done, as he himself expressed it, 'on the quick:' hence the freeness, freshness, and forcibleness of his writings. And in the variety of subjects on which he wrote, subjects philosophical, classical, and artistic; gay and grave; humorous and pathetic; respecting scenery and country life; notable characters, humble folks, and canine friends,—all are handled in a way peculiarly his own, with consummate skill, delicacy of taste, keenness of observation, and realistic power.

Others have wondered that Dr. Brown, being a physician of so much experience and power of observation, should have written nothing special on any strictly professional subject, not even a case in a medical journal. But while his genius carried him by preference on those lines which have instructed and delighted thousands of the general public, he did

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not overlook the importance and the interests of his own profession; for in the papers 'Locke and Sydenham,' 'Education through the Senses,' 'Art and Science—a contrasted parallel,' 'Competition in Medicine,' 'With Brains, Sir!' the 'Exeursus Ethicus,' 'Lay Sermons on Health,' 'Our Gideon Grays,' 'Dr. Henry Marshall and Military Hygiene,' and numerous memorial sketches of medical men,—even in 'Rab and his Friends,' Dr. Brown, by the reflected light of an all-round knowledge of medicine, inculcated thoroughly orthodox views in medical faith and practice, as regards the self-regulating, self-adjusting power of Nature in disease; the primary importance of medicine viewed as the art of healing, not less than as the science of diseases and drugs; and the great importance of a liberal education to qualify a medical man for the honourable and successful exercise of his profession. Besides, he has not overlooked in these papers the ethics, duties, and responsibilities of the profession, namely, the courtesy which is due by practitioners to each other,—not always attended to in the present times; the kindness due to patients, and the consideration due by the public to the

profession, and especially to our hard-worked country doctors—the Gideon Grays, who, with doubtful praise, have been styled the ‘rough and ready’ practitioners, but are now, at least, with few exceptions, as well equipped as the general run of city doctors.

The prime qualifications of a physician or surgeon Dr. Brown sums up in these pregnant words:—‘*Capax*, *Perspicax*, *Sagax*, *Efficax*:—*Capax*, there must be room to receive, and arrange, and keep knowledge: *Perspicax*, senses and perceptions—keen, accurate, and immediate, to bring in materials from all sensible things; *Sagax*, a central power of knowing what is what, and what it is worth, of choosing and rejecting, of judging; and finally, *Efficax*, the will and the way, the power to turn all the other three—capacity, perspicacity, sagacity—to account in the performance of the thing on hand, thus rendering back to the outer world, in a new and useful form, what is received from it. These are the intellectual qualities which make up the physician, without any one of which he would be *manus*, and would not deserve the name of a complete artsman, any more than *proteine* would be itself, if any one of its four



elements were amissing.’<sup>1</sup> As a postscript to these philosophical and practical views, I would quote a worldly-wise bit of advice which Dr. Brown gives:— ‘Let me tell my young doctor friends, that a cheerful face and step, and neckcloth, and buttonhole, and an occasional hearty and kindly joke, a power of exciting, a setting-agoing a good laugh, are stock in our trade not to be despised. The merry heart does good like a medicine.’<sup>2</sup>

While speaking of the qualifications and duties of doctors for the right practice of their profession, Dr. Brown has in various passages of his papers uttered some wholesome truths in regard to employers and the public generally. For example, he remarks on the aspects of society in those days—and it is still more applicable to the state of matters at the present time: ‘Every one is for ever looking after, and talking of everybody else’s health, and advising and prescribing either his or her doctor or drug; and that wholesome modesty and shamefacedness, which, I regret to say, is now old-fashioned, is vanishing like

<sup>1</sup> *Ilor, Subs.* ‘With Brains, Sir!’ Series ii. pp. 402-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Series i., ‘Locke and Sydenham,’ Introductory, p. 31.

other things, and is being put off as if modesty were a mode, or dress, rather than a condition or essence. Besides the bad moral habit this engenders, it breaks up what is now too rare, the old feeling of the family doctor—there are now as few old family doctors as servants—the familiar, kindly face, which has presided through generations at births and deaths; the friend who bears about, and keeps sacred, deadly secrets which must be laid silent in the grave, and who knows the stuff his stock is made of—their “constitutions.” All this sort of thing is greatly gone, especially in large cities; and much of this love of change, of talk, of having everything explained, or at least named,—especially if it be in Latin; of running from one “charming” specialist to another; of doing a little privately and dishonestly to one’s-self or the children with the globules; of going to see some notorious great man without telling or taking with them their old family friend, merely as they say “to satisfy their mind,” and of course ending in leaving and affronting and injuring the wise and good man.’ . . . ‘Publicity, itching ears, want of reverence for the unknown, want of trust in goodness, want of what we call faith,

want of gratitude and fair dealing, on the part of the public; and on the part of the profession, cupidity, curiosity, restlessness, ambition, false trust in self and in science, the lust and haste to be rich, and to be thought knowing and omniscient, want of breeding and good sense, of common honesty and honour, these are the occasions and results of this state of things.’<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Brown was in his views, curiously enough, conservative as regarded the functions of the Medical Faculty in our Universities, while in argument ultra radical concerning medical practice. In the crisis of 1858 he was opposed alike to the licensing arrangements of the Medical and Surgical Corporations, and to those of the Universities. In the last edition of his collected works, 12th April 1882, the following paragraph occurs: ‘I am more convinced than ever of the futility and worse of the licensing system; and think, with Adam Smith, that a mediciner should be as free to exercise his gifts as an architect or mole-catcher. The public has its own shrewd way of knowing who should build its house or catch its moles; and it may be safely left to take the same

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.* i. ‘Locke and Sydenham,’ *Introd.* pp. 19-21.

line in choosing its doctor.’<sup>1</sup> This opinion, that there should be no credentials at all for practice, will not in these days be indorsed by many; but such were Dr. Brown’s views, and held to the last. Then in regard to new methods in the investigation of disease, while in the early days of the employment of the stethoscope, the microscope, the sphygmograph, etc., Dr. Brown gave to them a somewhat hesitating adhesion, urging in the strongest terms the all-important necessity for the cultivation and concentration of the unassisted senses in diagnosis, yet in later times he came to recognise that by such aids a great enlargement of our knowledge was obtained; and so qualified previous utterances by saying, such means ‘are good, but don’t let us neglect the drawing out into full power by the keen and intelligent use of our senses, those eyes, ears, and hands, which we can always carry about with us.’ Dr. Brown was, it must be said, slow to give up the old and simple articles of the Pharmacopœia, and adopt new remedies. Regarding all these matters, indeed, he seemed to see eye to

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.* i. ‘Locke and Sydenham,’ *Introd.* p. 11, *note*.

eye with Mr. Syme, with whom he was so close a companion. To them as to myself there seemed, at that time, a rash striving in the profession to strike out something new, which, without due consideration, was speculative, or led to hap-hazard, meddlesome practice. But I believe that if both Syme and he had lived longer they would have hailed with delight the wonderful progress in medicine and surgery resulting from new methods of investigation; the development of the germ theory; the combined triumphs of antiseptics with anæsthetics; and the advances in *Materia Medica* and therapeutics.

When at the bedside of the invalid, and the case not serious, Dr. Brown's cheery smile, kindly or quaint remark, an appropriate anecdote or the notice of anything odd or novel in the apartment, relieved for a time at least morbid apprehension or nervousness in the patient, and so proved highly beneficial, even without a prescription, and with the result that repetition of the visit was longed for. But when the case was serious he was grave, tender, warmly sympathetic, and gave the patient the full benefit of his large experience, and remarkably acute and

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concentrated mind. His prescriptions, like Mr. Syme's, were simple in the extreme, having always a clear physiological and pathological bearing according to his own lights, derived from the early cultivation of the senses and a wonderfully extensive course of professional reading. He proved himself to be in all respects a most judicious and safe physician; and at one time had made for himself, if not a large, yet a select practice, which would doubtless have been larger, and retained to the end, had it not been for the recurrence of ill health. Besides, his practice might have been much more extensive, and more lucrative, had he exercised more worldly wisdom and commercial accuracy in the working of it. Doctors are not always so gratefully remembered, or so generously recompensed, as they ought to be, for services rendered in the preservation of health and strength,—often of life itself: and so I believe our able, and good, and sympathetic friend's labours were frequently most inadequately acknowledged. I question whether he was ever able when asked to name his fee, but left it entirely to the goodwill and ability of the patient—a course,

moreover, which was much more common in those days than at present. Speaking generally, the practice then was perhaps more befitting the dignity of the profession, having less in it of a commercial spirit.

Dr. Brown's various attainments highly qualified him for the work required in connection with Life Assurance; and consequently, on the death of Dr. Patrick Newbigging, he was appointed in January 1864 to the Medical Officership of the Life Association of Scotland, of which he had been for several years a director. This office he held during the remainder of his life; and as I did occasional duty for him from the above period to 1876,—at which time I was appointed Joint Medical Officer,—I had ample opportunity of observing the wisdom of his opinions, and the confidence which the board of directors reposed in them.

As there are better opportunities in the medical profession than in any other for the study of human character, and the observation of the many-sided aspects of social and private life, its



virtues and vices, frailties and peculiarities, Dr. Brown, with his remarkably keen faculty of discernment, turned these opportunities to the best account, not only in the practice of his profession, but still more in his various literary productions, and was thus, perhaps, enabled to throw with greater effect side-lights on human character and action. This is most apparent in that early and most popular of all his productions, 'Rab and his Friends,' in which his literary and other qualities are so charmingly displayed.

I have already spoken of the origin and world-wide fame of this incomparable idyll. Its singularly simple construction, vivid narrative, and exquisite pathos, blended with easy humour, have touched many a heart and drawn many a tear. Had Dr. Brown written nothing else than this fascinating story, his name would have been immortalised. It is unquestionably the masterpiece of his numerous papers, meritorious as all of them are. It was first published in pamphlet form in 1858, twenty-eight years after the circumstances occurred which



suggested the story, and shortly afterwards in the first series of the *Horæ Subsecivæ*. Since then it has gone through a number of editions in this country in separate pamphlet forms with and without illustrations, and been reprinted in different editions of the *Horæ* in our Colonies, and in America, where it has been largely circulated, and it has also been translated into several languages.

What could be more touchingly natural, pathetic, and memorable, than such descriptions as the following: ‘Ailie’s unforgettable face, pale, serious, lonely, delicate, sweet; her “mutch” white as snow, with its black ribbons; her silvery, smooth hair, setting off her dark grey eyes—eyes such as one sees only twice or thrice in a lifetime, full of suffering, full also of the overcoming of it; her eyebrows black and delicate, and her mouth firm, patient, and contented, which few mouths ever are!’ Then on her arrival at Minto House Hospital how her husband James lifted her from the cart as if ‘Solomon in all his glory had been handing down the Queen of Sheba at his palace-gate; but who could not have done it more daintily, more tenderly, more like a gentleman than

did the Howgate carrier!’<sup>1</sup> And all that follows:—the operation, so bravely endured—no anæsthetic in those days; the effect the courage shown by her had on the feelings of the youthful students; her courtesy to them; the operator; the after tender watching by her ‘ain man,’ who ‘wad hae nane o’ yer stryngie nurses;’ and lastly, Ailie, when delirious and dying, living her early days over again, singing bits of old ballads mingled with the Psalms of David, and ‘rolling up a nightgown, murmuring foolish little words over it,’ while holding it to her wounded breast with a look of surprising tenderness and joy, which action her afflicted husband interpreted by saying, ‘Wae’s me, Doctor, I declare she’s thinkin’ it’s that bairn—the only bairn we ever had—our wee Mysie; and she’s in the Kingdom forty years and mair,’—all this and much more—for it is full of touching passages—is told with remarkable simplicity, pathos, and power. The death of Rab, too, like those of his mistress and master, is pathetic in the extreme. This I may also summarise in a few words. The ground was again white with snow, and

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series ii. p. 373.

Ailie's grave was in a short time opened to receive the remains of her devoted and broken-hearted husband. Rab again looks on at a distance, then slinks home to the stable; refuses food; will not leave Jess the old mare, or permit an approach to her; and becomes so dangerous as to necessitate a 'happy despatch'—which, as the narrator expresses it, 'fit end for Rab, quick and complete:—his teeth and his friends gone, why should he keep the peace and be civil?'

Next to 'Rab and his Friends,' the paper which has excited most popular interest is 'Marjorie Fleming.' It came from Dr. Brown's hands in 1860. In 1858 there was published in Kirkealdy, by the late Mr. Henry Brougham Farnie, a small book, the title of which was 'Pet Marjorie,' a story of child life fifty years ago, inscribed by permission to Lady Harriet St. Clair. The author was at that time, I believe, a journalist, and afterwards distinguished himself as the writer of the libretto of *Les Cloches de Corneville* and several songs. He seems to have had access to the Journal which the child genius had kept, and from this he extracted many

interesting passages, making a most readable narrative. Dr. Brown, I believe, had seen this little book, but still it was open to him to treat the story of that remarkably clever and lovable child as he thought best. Her relatives confided the Journal and letters to him with additional particulars regarding her life and death. In reading over the respective biographies there is not a sentence in Dr. Brown's writing which approaches a trespass on Farnie's work. Throughout, there is a very great difference in the quotations from the Journal: and the discrimination and lively critical ability with which Dr. Brown has handled this most interesting subject have gained for the story, as in the case of 'Rab and his Friends,' universal admiration. The subject must have been a truly delightful one to himself:—a child so young,<sup>1</sup> so precocious, so utterly unconscious of her own abilities and attractions, so observant, so natural and quaint in her ways, and so full of love and affection. With what grace and artistic skill does he introduce the subject! What could be more delicious in incident

<sup>1</sup> Born 15th January 1803, and died 19th December 1811.

and eharacter than the seene in which the then 'great unknown' novelist is deseribed, when, finding himself one day 'off the fang' in writing his *Waverley*, he hastened to a neighbouring house and earried off to his own in Castle Street during an '*on-ding o' snaw*,' in the *cul de sac* of his shepherd's plaid, his pet Marjorie; and then, after unfolding it and holding her on his knee, spending hours of mer-riment and wonderment with the 'rosie wee wifie,' pretending to be taught by her ehildish rhymes, and in return teaehing her eurious old ballads, and getting her to reeite passages from Shakespeare!<sup>1</sup> And then, could any words be more pathetie or in better taste than these, when the biographer comes to draw the eurtain over this young life? 'This dainty, bright thing is about to flee,—to eome "quiek to eonfusion."' The day before her death (Sunday) she sat up in bed, worn and thin, her eye gleaming as with the light of a eoming world, and with a tremu-lous old voiee repeated the following lines of Burns —(a remarkable choiee for a ehild)—heavy with the shadow of death and lit with the phantasy of

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series iii. p. 204.

the judgment-seat, the publican's prayer in paraphrase:—

“Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?  
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?  
Some drops of joy, with draughts of ill between,  
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms;  
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?  
Or Death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?  
For guilt, for GUILT, my terrors are in arms;  
I tremble to approach an angry God,  
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

“Fain would I say, ‘Forgive my foul offence!’  
Fain promise never more to disobey;  
But, should my Author health again dispense,  
Again I might desert fair virtue's way;  
Again in folly's path might go astray;  
Again exalt the brute and sink the man;  
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,  
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?  
Who sin so oft have mourned, yet to temptation ran?

“O thou great Governor of all below!  
If I might dare a lifted eye to Thee,  
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,  
And still the tumult of the raging sea;  
With that controlling power assist even me  
Those headlong furious passions to confine,  
For all unfit I feel my powers to be  
To rule their torrent in the allowed line;  
O, aid me with Thy help, OMNIPOTENCE DIVINE!”

‘Do we make too much of this little child who has been in her grave in Abbotshall Kirkyard these fifty and more years? We may of her cleverness,—not of her affectionateness—her nature. What a picture the *animosa infans* gives us of herself, her vivacity, her passionateness, her precocious love-making, her passion for nature, for swine, for all living things, her reading, her turn for expression, her satire, her frankness, her little sins and rages, her repentances! We don’t wonder Walter Scott carried her off in the neuk of his plaid and played himself with her for hours.’<sup>1</sup>

Another most justly popular paper of Dr. Brown’s,—a genuine sketch drawn from personal observation,—is ‘Jeems, the Door-keeper’<sup>2</sup> of his father’s church in Broughton Place; concluding with a Lay Sermon addressed to a Young Men’s Christian Instruction Association, for which the sketch of Jeems was written.

Jeems is portrayed as having had an extensive Rhadamanthine face and nose; small keen eyes; a large body with short legs, covered by a huge blue

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series iii. pp. 229-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 281-99.

great-coat which reached down to his heels. He appears to have had an exalted idea of the importance of his office—as most beadles have—and was most steady and energetic in the discharge of its functions. One of these occasionally was the treatment of ‘thae young hizzies,’ as he called the servant girls who fainted in the church. Having been indoctrinated with clear views as to the nature and treatment of *syncope*, Jeems laid them flat on the floor, and with great zest and dexterity ripped up their stay-laces with a ‘gully’ knife kept for the purpose! But despite his uncouth appearance and apparent coarseness, the predominating traits of Jeems’s character were ‘rugged tenderness,’ contentment in life, and simple godliness. John, as a boy and youth, frequently breakfasted with him in his lonely room at the top of a long stair in the Canongate. ‘Jeems made capital porridge, and I think I see and hear him saying his grace over our *bickers*<sup>1</sup> with their *brats*<sup>2</sup> on;’ and then taking his Bible and Psalmbook out of an old, but now unrocking, wooden cradle —(for a wife and baby had died thirty-five years

<sup>1</sup> Wooden bowls.

<sup>2</sup> Skins.



before)—and ‘reading, not without a certain homely majesty, the first verse of the 99th Psalm, then launching out into the noble depths of *Irish*. . . . He had what he called *family* worship, morning and evening, never failing—even although alone. He not only sang his psalm, but gave out and ehanted *the line* in great style; and on seeing me one morning surprised at this, he said, “Ye see, John, oo”—meaning himself and his wife—(whom he never mentioned by name, but only as *she* or *her*) “began that way.” At this so-called family worship, ‘Jeems did what I never heard of in any one else: he had seven fixed tunes—one for each day in the week—and on Tuesday, the day on which his wife and ehild had died, *Coleshill*, that soft, exquisite air,—monotonous, melancholy, soothing, and vague, like the sea,—was what he invariably sang.’ The ehildren in the stair could tell the day of the week by the tune which reached their ears. One more partieular in the sketch of this remarkable ‘grim old Rhadamanthus, Bezalcel, U.P. *Naso*,’ and another respecting the linner who has so felieitously drawn it. Jeems having been bred a weaver, his friend John

one day said to him, 'What kind of weaver are you?' 'I'm in the *fancical line*, Maister John; I like its *leecence*.' 'So,' Dr. Brown in the paper exclaims, '*exit Jeems—impiger, iracundus, acer—torvus visu—placide quiescat!*'<sup>1</sup> And with sudden and fantastic transition from the humorous and pathetic regarding 'this dear old-world specimen of home-spun worth,' the Doctor becomes the preacher to the Young Men of the Association—speaking of himself, now as in the *fancical line*; and in virtue of his *leecence* commenced a series of clever, curiously quaint, and deeply spiritual exegetical remarks in his own peculiar style, on the pursuit of truth, and the possession of wisdom, taking these words as his text:—

'On Tintock tap there is a Mist,  
And in the Mist there is a Kist,  
And in the Kist there is a Cap;  
Tak' up the Cap and sup the drap,  
And set the Cap on Tintock tap.'

The Lay Sermon, or exposition spun out of this novel subject, is well worthy of being solemnly and

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series iii. pp. 289.

prayerfully read, and inwardly digested by young or old.

Dr. Brown had a passionate love of nature; whatever in her was sweet and soothing, weird-like or grand, and in the varied aspects of sunshine, cloud or storm. The effects of these on him were soul-felt; not mere impressions of sensual admiration, but mingled feelings of wonder, adoration, and veneration, exciting in him an inarticulate hymn of praise. As he had taken frequent excursions with congenial friends in the south and west of Scotland, in Wales, in the Cumberland Lake country (when visiting Ruskin), and in Ireland, also continental tours, it would have been interesting to have had from him other DESCRIPTIVE papers besides 'Minchmoor' and 'The Enterkin.' But only in letters to friends were his thoughts on these occasions expressed, such as while on a tour in the Hebrides and Argyllshire Highlands, he wrote: 'I was out all night in Tobermory Bay worshipping, pagan-like, the heavenly host; then off at three in the morning past Ardnamurchan with the biggest and most blazing of

morning stars, and presently the sun rising up. I never saw such a scene; we were in a sort of extempore heaven, earth, and sky, and sea—one imagery; and the hills of Morven, and the enchanted hills of Skye, and Rum, and Eigg, and even Muck, all in unspeakable beauty and strangeness.' . . . 'The Coolin hills are not to be spoken of with one's hat on. I am for ever dreaming about them, and the glorious Coruisk. . . . It was perfect: first gloomy, the ridges hidden by fleecy mist; then they revealed their awful faces, and were seen clear against the sky in their wild tragic forms; then shrouded again; and then one looking out here and there as if to say, 'don't presume, we are all here.' It is a wonderful place for power and a certain weird solemnity: we were quite filled with the glory of the place.'

In his paper on 'Minehmoor,'<sup>1</sup> while crossing with him from Traquair to Yarrow, we seem to feel the awe of the weird and solitary scene—especially around 'the haunted spring;' and see with him, on reaching the flat head of the moor, the distant range of the Cheviots and Lammermoors, which burst on

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series iii. p. 241.

the view, while the ‘great round-backed, kindly, solemn hills of Tweed and Ettrick lie all about like sleeping mastiffs—too plain to be grand, too ample and beautiful to be commonplace.’ In this fancied excursion he relieves, as it were, fatigue, by reminiscences of the place where Sir Walter Scott met, and parted for the last time, with Mungo Park, the distinguished African traveller; and of a *crack* with a ‘fine specimen of a Border herd—young, tall, sagacious, self-contained, and free in speech and air,’ who in praise of *Jed*, his fine collie, black and comely, gentle and keen, said, with a true south country accent: ‘Ay, she’s a fell yin; she can dae a’ but speak;’ and who, on being asked if the dog needed much teaching, replied: ‘Her kind needs nane; she sooks’t in wi’ her mither’s milk.’ And on descending into the beautiful, classical, and deservedly besung vale of Yarrow our thoughts turn to the Border raids; the Douglas tragedy, and the Dowie Dens; to the Flower of Yarrow, the bold Buccleuch, and the outlaw Murray. Altogether this paper is most refreshingly racy and artistic. It recalls the lines of Wordsworth as to the experience of one viewing such

varied scenery—the mind filled with equally varied associations :—

‘Who thinks and feels  
And recognises ever and anon  
The breeze of nature stirring in his soul :’<sup>1</sup>

for while reading it we can fancy even feeling the exhilarating breath of mountain air; and at each step throughout the ascent from Traquair experiencing the charm of the ever shifting views of the vale of the Tweed with its—

‘silver stream,  
Glittering in the sunny beam.’

Though not so fascinating to many as ‘Minchmoor,’ ‘The Enterkin’ has fine word-pictures, giving us glimpses into the wild loneliness of that Pass :—‘the wonderful steepness and narrowness of the glen, its beauty, solemnity, eeriness, gentle gloom, depth, and height, its unity and sacred peace.’<sup>2</sup>

‘It is not quiet, is not ease,  
But something deeper far than these;  
The separation that is here  
Is of the grave; and of austere,  
Yet happy feelings of the dead.’

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<sup>1</sup> *The Excursion*, Book iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, vol. iii. p. 349.

Then as to 'Queen Mary's Child-Garden,' short as the article is, it may be reckoned in its few sentences as second, and akin in respect of pure and simple pathos, to that of 'Marjorie Fleming.' Think of Mary Stuart's 'little walk, and its rows of box-wood, left to themselves for three hundred years. Yes, without doubt, "here is that first garden of her simpleness." Fancy the little lovely royal child, with four Marys, her play-fellows, her child-maids of honour, with their little hands and feet, and their innocent and happy eyes, pattering about that garden all that time ago, laughing and running and gardening as only children do and can. . . . There is something "that tirls the heart-strings a' to the life" in standing and looking on this unmistakable living relief of that strange and pathetic old time. Were we Mr. Tennyson, we would write an Idyl of that Child-Queen in that garden of hers, eating her bread and honey, getting her teaching from the holy men, the monks of old, and running off in wild mirth to her garden and flowers, all unconscious of the black, lowering thundercloud on Ben Lomond's shoulder.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series ii. p. 176.

Regarding ART, I have already noticed Dr. Brown's first important paper, 'Notes on Art,' and I need do no more than refer again to his other early article in the *North British Review* on 'Modern Painters.' These two papers, and those on 'John Leech,' 'Sir Henry Raeburn,' and 'Sir Edwin Landseer's picture, *There's Life in the Old Dog yet*,' abundantly show, what all his friends knew well, his intense love of Art, and warm appreciation and knowledge of the masters in it. 'Art (he has said) is part of my daily food, like the laughter of children, and the common air, the earth, the sky; it is an affection, not a passion to come and go like the gusty winds, nor as principles cold and dead; it penetrates my entire life, and is one of the surest and deepest pleasures:—'<sup>1</sup>

'Nature he loved, and next to Nature Art.'

As an ART CRITIC no one who reads what he has written regarding art can doubt his powers in that respect, and his correct ideas of the true principles which should govern works of art. A single passage from the article on John Leech is sufficient to show

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series ii. p. 231.



this. 'This intense realism and insight [speaking of Leech], this pure intense power of observation, is that which makes the Greek so infinitely above the Roman sculptors. The Greeks knew nothing of what was under the skin—it was considered profane to open the human body and dissect it,—but they studied form and action with that keen, sure, unforgetting, loving eye, that purely realistic faculty, which probably they, as a race, had in more exquisite perfection than any other people before or since. The Romans had no misgivings or shyness at cutting into and laying bare their dead fellows, as little as they had in killing them, or being themselves killed. They must needs show off their knowledge and their muscles, and therefore they made their statues as if without skin, and put on often as violent and often impossible action as ever did Buonarotti. Compare the Laocoon and his boys (small men rather) with the Elgin Marbles, the riders on the frieze so comely in their going, so lissome; their skin slipping sweetly over their muscles; their modestly representing not of what they know, but of what they see.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series iii. pp. 15, 16.

Dr. Brown recognises in Leech—though a caricaturist—the highest perfection of art, that which is realistic in form, expression, and character; so that life and motion, humour and pathos, comedy and tragedy, are all depicted with perfect purity, good taste, unmistakable truthfulness, and incomparable power. ‘We do not know any finer instance of blamelessness in art or literature, such perfect delicacy and cleanliness of mind,—nothing coarse,—nothing having the slightest taint of indecency,—no *double entendre*,—no laughing at virtue,—no glorifying or glozing at vice,—nothing to make any one of his own lovely girls blush, or his own handsome face hide itself. This gentleness and thorough gentlemanliness pervades all his works. They are done by a man you would take into your family and to your heart at once.’<sup>1</sup> Noticing the fertility of Leech’s pencil, he says: ‘In *Punch* alone, up to 1862, there are more than 3000 separate drawings, with hardly the vestige of repetition! and in nothing is his realistic power more seen than in those delightful records of his own holidays. A geologist will tell

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, iii. p. 33.

you the exact structure of the rock in the Tay at Campsie Linn where *Mr. Briggs* is carrying out that huge salmon in his arms, tenderly and safely, as if it were his first-born.' <sup>1</sup>

It is well known that after Leech's decease his family furnished Dr. Brown with many specimens of his works and writings, and information in regard to his life for the purpose of having a memoir written of him; but this unfortunately happened at a time when Dr. Brown was affected with serious illness, and the work was never entered on.

The article on Leech in the *Horæ Subsecivæ* was first printed in the *North British Review*, illustrated with a number of admirable woodcuts; but these being absent in its new form, Dr. Brown feared 'it might be dishd for want of the plates—to give a twist to Rogers's well-known joke.' <sup>2</sup>

Some who did not know Dr. Brown's real discriminating power respecting works of art have complained of his notices as sometimes too laudatory; but it must be remembered that the published art notices of the Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition by

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, iii. pp. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface, p. 6.

him were only respecting the works of artists in the highest rank of their profession. He was ever on the look-out for that which was really good in art, and ever ready to bestow praise on those to whom praise was justly due: he saw abundance of what was weak and poor in art, only to be passed by with a smile or a kindly private joke; and much of that which was mediocre in effort was treated with faint praise, or with encouragement to the artist to go on in the hope of something better being produced in course of time.

Before leaving the subject of Art I must say a word or two on Dr. Brown's own ability in sketching. He never was taught to draw, and never did anything in the way of colouring, but with his pen he showed no small ability in sketches of a comic character. Many of his friends treasure the possession of these rapidly executed drawings. They have already been spoken of as frequently done in correspondence with juvenile friends, or left as calling-cards. Perhaps the two best of his sketches are a representation of *Jeems the Door-keeper* as a frontispiece to that paper; and one bearing the title '*Pity the sorrows of us poor houseless*

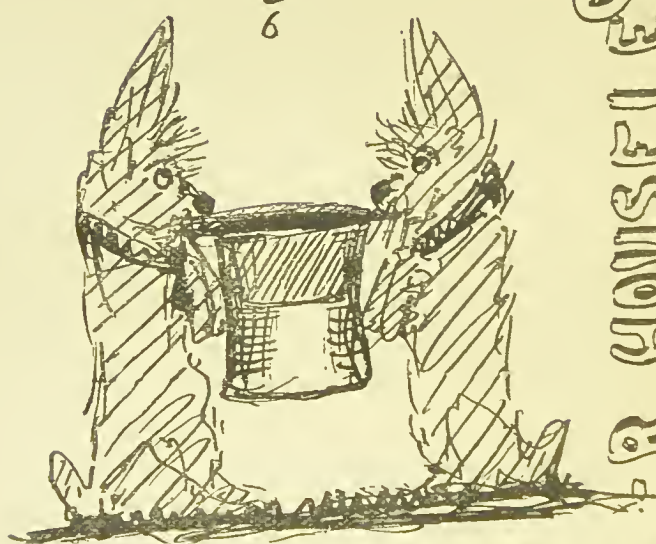
*dogs.*' Mr. Ruskin in an article on 'The Black Arts'—namely, the development of etching, photogravure, and photography, in Cassell's *Magazine of Art*, says:—  
 'There is a little book, a very precious and pretty one, of Dr. John Brown's, called "Something about a Well." It has a yellow paper cover, and on the cover a careful woodcut from one of the doctor's own pen sketches—two wire-haired terriers begging, and carrying an old hat between them. There is certainly not more than five minutes' work, if that, in the original sketch; but the quantity of dog life in those two beasts—the hill weather that they have roughed through together, the wild fidelity of their wistful hearts, the pitiful, irresistible mendicancy of their eyes and paws—fills me with new wonder and love every time the little book falls out of any of the cherished maps in my study. . . . I begin to wish for a little less to look at, and would for my part gladly exchange my tricks of stippling and tinting for the good doctor's gift of drawing two wire-haired terriers with a wink.'

The sketch of the dog *Wasp*, on a preceding page, is another felicitous expression given by a few

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NOTE.—This early sketch was given to one of my daughters by Dr. Brown, drawn probably about the time, 1862, when he wrote in the columns of the *Scotsman* his 'Plea for a Dog Home.'

lines of what Mr. Ruskin has called 'the quantity of dog life.'

The above-mentioned article on John Leech, although mainly devoted to the subject of art, belongs to the group of Dr. Brown's MEMORIAL PAPERS. That group is a large one, embracing memories of his father in a 'Letter to John Cairns, D.D.'; articles on 'Locke and Sydenham;' 'Dr. Chalmers;' 'Dr. George Wilson;' 'Dr. Andrew Combe;' 'Dr. Henry Marshall;' 'Edward Forbes;' 'Dr. Adams of Banchory;' 'David Ritchie (or the Black Dwarf's bones);' 'Thackeray's Death;' 'The Duke of Athole;' 'Struan;' 'Dr. John Scott and his Son;' 'Mr. Symc;' 'Sir Robert Christison;' and 'Miss Stirling Graham of Duntrune.'<sup>1</sup>

In these biographical and memorial sketches there is much truthful delineation of very different types of men; there are many most interesting incidents and anecdotes introduced;

<sup>1</sup> This was the old lady of whose most amusing pranks,—

'Her quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,

Dr. John also writes in his paper on her book *Mystifications: Hora Subsecivæ*, Series iii. pp. 117-165.



there is abundant evidence of the writer's literary powers, his quaint and racy style, naïve humour, genial and sympathetic nature; and especially of his warm appreciation of whatsoever things in human character and action are true, honourable, pure, lovely, and of good report. Some have considered John Brown as too generally appreciative in these notices, and that his own goodness and amiability led him into an excess of praise. But, as has been already said respecting his notices of certain works of art and artists, it may be said of the subjects of these articles, that of his own choice he became the biographer only of those whom he could conscientiously hold up to the world as worthy of admiration and esteem for some acts in life, or special qualities of mind and heart. There was nothing cynical or disputatious in his nature; and perhaps that appreciation of excellence in others contributed somewhat at times to his self-depreciation, or abnegation of personal worth. Throughout life, public controversy, or even private discussion, was distasteful and avoided; while it was known to intimate friends that he formed very decided impressions and opinions



regarding men and things to which he held, though not perhaps to the *tenax propositi* extent which, he himself averred, was a heredity of the family of Browns.

Mr. Andrew Lang has well said: 'We must acknowledge that the Scotch temper is critical if not capacious, argumentative, inclined to look at the seamy side of men and of their performances, and to dwell on imperfections rather than on merits and virtues. An example of these blemishes of the Scotch disposition, carried to an extreme degree in the nature of a man of genius, is offered to the world in the writings and 'reminiscences' of Mr. Carlyle. Now Dr. John Brown was at the opposite pole of feeling. He had no inawkish toleration of things and people intolerable, but *he preferred not to turn his mind that way*. His thoughts were with the good, the wise, the modest, the learned, the brave of times past, and he was eager to catch a reflection of their qualities in the characters of the living, of all with whom he came into contact. He was, for example, almost optimistic in his estimate of the work of young people in art or literature. From everything that was beautiful or

good, from a summer day by the Tweed, or from the eyes of a child, or from the humorous saying of a friend, or from treasured memories of old Scotch worthies, from recollections of his own childhood, from experience of the stoical heroism of the poor, he seemed to extract matter for pleasant thoughts of men and the world, and nourishment of his own great and gentle nature. I have never known any man to whom other men seemed so dear,—men dead and men living. He gave his genius to knowing them, and to making them better known, and his unselfishness thus became not only a great personal virtue, but a great literary charm.’<sup>1</sup>

Quotations have already been made from several of the memorial papers above enumerated, particularly from those on Thackeray, Leech, and Syme; but I cannot leave the group without some comment on that of his own father’s life. It is not only the longest of the memorial series, but, to my mind, it is *par excellence* the finest of all his writings. In consequence of the ambiguous title of

<sup>1</sup> The *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, vol. xxv., December 1882, No. 2, p. 241.

a ‘Letter to John Cairns, D.D.,’—the late lamented Principal of the United Presbyterian Theological College—I think it has not attracted the wide attention which otherwise it might have done. A dedication of the Article to that learned and widely esteemed preacher and professor, considering the origin of ‘the Letter,’ and the ecclesiastical and friendly relations to the subject of it, would have been highly proper; but the title should certainly have been more specific, as a memorial of the life and work of such a distinguished divine as the Rev. Dr. John Brown. For the tens or hundreds of thousands at home and abroad who have read, laughed, and wept over ‘Rab and his Friends,’ I believe comparatively few have had their attention drawn to this ‘Letter,’ in which the son invests his father’s life with a peculiar interest, while he so happily depicts his environments, and delineates the characters and personalities of progenitors, contemporaries, and associates.<sup>1</sup> I have already quoted somewhat freely from that ‘Letter’ in speaking of John’s early life, etc.; but to such as have not read it I commend it as

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series ii. pp. 1-100.

a masterpiece of artistic biography, written with singular freshness, sweetness, simplicity, and power, while abounding with touches of humour and pathos. The way in which he works out within moderate limits the various phases of his father's life—his habits and character in youth, as a husband and parent, a preacher and professor,—is very charming. The esteem in which his father was held at an early period of life in Biggar, and the sacredness of his mother's memory is touchingly described in these words:—‘At my mother's death, his sorrow and loss settled down deep into the heart of the countryside. She was modest, calm, thrifty, reasonable, tender, happy-hearted. She was his student-love, and is even now remembered in that pastoral region for her “sweet gentleness and wife-like government:” while he was so young and bright, so full of fire, so unlike any one else, so devoted to his work, so chivalrous in his look and manner, so fearless, and yet so sensitive and self contained; and she so wise, good, gentle, gracious, and frank.’<sup>1</sup>

For his father, John's reverence and admiration

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series ii. p. 7.

was great. He says: 'The idea of his life, what he was as a whole, what was his self, all his days, would—to go on with words which not time or custom can ever wither or make stale,—

'Sweetly creep  
Into my study of imagination ;  
And every lovely organ of his life  
Would come apparelled in more precious habit—  
More moving delicate, and full of life,  
Into the eye and prospect of my soul,  
Than when he lived indeed ;'

as if the sacredness of death and the bloom of eternity were on it; or as you may have seen in an untroubled lake, the heaven reflected with its clouds, brighter, purer, more exquisite than itself; but when you try to put this into words, to detain yourself over it, it is by this very act disturbed, broken and bedimmed, and soon vanishes away, as would the imaged heavens in the lake if a pebble were cast into it, or a breath of wind stirred its face.<sup>1</sup> Again he says: 'I never knew a man who lived more truly under the power, and sometimes under the shadow, of the world to come.'<sup>2</sup> Then as to his physical appearance, and his manner in the pulpit, we have

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* p. 46.

this remarkable though somewhat lengthy delineation : ‘My father was tall, slim, agile, quick in his movements, graceful, neat to nicety in his dress, with much in his air of what is called style, with a face almost too beautiful for a man’s, had not his eyes commanded it and all who looked at it, and his close, firm mouth been ready to say what the fiery spirit might bid ; his eyes, when at rest, expressing—more than almost any other’s I ever saw—sorrow and tender love, a desire to give and to get sympathy, and a sort of gentle deep sadness, as if that was their permanent state, and gladness their momentary act ; but when awakened, full of fire, peremptory, and not to be trifled with ; and his smile, and flash of gaiety and fun, something no one could forget ; his hair in early life a dead black ; his eyebrows of exquisite curve, narrow and intense ; his voice deep when unmoved and calm, keen and sharp to piercing fierceness when vehement and roused—in the pulpit at times a shout, at times a pathetic wail ; his utterance hesitating, emphatic, explosive, powerful,—each sentence shot straight and home ; his hesitation arising from his crowd of impatient ideas, and his

resolute will that they should come in their order, and some of them not come at all, only the best, and his settled determination that each thought should be dressed in the very and only word which he stammered on till it came,—it was generally worth his pains and ours.’<sup>1</sup>

A recent writer says: ‘If Dr. John Brown did not inherit all his father’s mental grasp and concentration, he added a delicacy of perception, a breadth of mental vision, a fineness of intellectual fibre, and a human sweetness of nature, to which the old Seceder Minister, grand old man as he undoubtedly was, could hardly lay claim.’<sup>2</sup>

Not the least interesting, certainly the most amusing, parts of ‘the Letter’ consist of incidents and anecdotes introduced by Dr. John, not only of his father, but of his great-grandfather, grandfather, his uncles and their contemporaries, ecclesiastical and civil, which give an artistic sparkle to almost every page, and a zest, without which biographical writing is apt to prove flat and dull.

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series ii. pp. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Richardson, B.A., *U. P. Magazine*, January 1892, p. 7.

The other articles in the *Horæ Subsecivæ*, which I have not specially noticed, namely, 'Locke and Sydenham;' 'Art and Science, a contrasted Parallel;' 'Education through the Senses;' 'Free competition in Medicine;' 'Excursus Ethicus;' 'With Brains, Sir!' 'Henry Vaughan;' and 'Arthur Hallam' are of a most strictly PHILOSOPHICAL and CRITICAL character. I will merely draw attention to the first and most philosophical of these, that concerning JOHN LOCKE, the distinguished author of the *Essay on Human Understanding*, and THOMAS SYDENHAM, spoken of as 'the Prince of practical Physicians.'<sup>1</sup> Of them Dr. Brown remarks: 'The one was the founder of our analytical philosophy of mind, and the other our practical medicine; and they were not only great personal friends, but of essential use to each other in their respective departments.' Locke, by early experience in the practice of medicine, and by his intimacy with Sydenham, appears to have gained great benefit from the close observation of 'facts,—objective realities;' and was so led to adopt the same method in the study of mental science; while

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub. i.* 'Locke and Sydenham,' p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36.



Sydenham was strengthened in the practice of his profession by like inductive methods in the pursuit of scientific truth, and in their application to diagnosis and treatment.

Professor Masson thus critically and incisively expresses himself<sup>1</sup> regarding Dr. Brown's views in this article on 'Locke and Sydenham,' as well as on others in his more or less philosophical and literary papers : — 'They all propound and illustrate one idea, which had taken such strong hold of the author that it may be called one of his characteristics. It is the idea of distinction or contrast between the speculative, theoretical, or scientific habit of mind, and the practical or active habit. In medical practice and medical education more particularly, Dr. John Brown thought there had come to be too much attention to mere science, too much faith in mere increase of knowledge and exquisiteness of research and apparatus, and too little regard for that solid breadth of mind, that soundness of practical observation, and power of decision in emergencies,—that instinctive

<sup>1</sup> 'Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh,' *Macmillan's Magazine*, February 1883, pp. 284-5, and lately reprinted in *Edinburgh Sketches and Memories* : A. and C. Black, London and Edinburgh.

or æquired sagaeity, which had been conspicuous among the best of the older physicians. . . . Dr. John never tired of ineuleating this distinction; it is the baekbone of all those papers of his that have been just mentioned, and it appears in others. In his special little essay called 'Art and Science' he formulates it thus:—

## IN MEDICINE

SCIENCE	ART
Looks to essence and cause.	Looks to symptoms and occasions.
Is diagnostic.	Is therapeutic and prognostic.
Has a system.	Has a method.
Is <i>post-mortem</i> .	Is <i>ante-mortem</i> .
Looks to structure more than function.	Looks to function more than structure.
Studies the phenomeua of poisoning.	Runs for the stomach-pump.
Submits to be ignorant of nothing.	Submits to be ignorant of much.
Speaks.	Acts.

‘Now, in the particular matter in question, so far as it is here represented, we should doubtless all agree with our friend. We should all for ourselves, in serious illness, infinitely prefer the attendance of any tolerable physician of the therapeutic and prognostic type to that of the ablest of the merely diagnostic type, espeecially if we thought that the genius of the latter inclined him to a post-mortem examination. Henec we may be disposed to think that Dr. John

did good service in protesting against the run upon science, ever new science, in the medicine of his day, and trying to hark back the profession to the good old virtues of common sense, practical clear-sightedness, and vigorous rule-of-thumb. What I detect, however, underneath all his expositions of this possibly salutary idea, and prompting to his reiterations of it, is something deeper. It is a dislike in his own nature to the abstract or theoretical in all matters whatsoever. Dr. John Brown's mind, I should say, was essentially anti-speculative. His writings abound, of course, with tributes of respect to science and philosophy, and expressions of astonishment and gratitude for their achievements; but it may be observed that the thinkers and philosophers to whom he refers most fondly are chiefly those older magnates, including Bacon, Newton, Locke, and Bishop Butler, among the English, whose struggle was over long ago, whose results are an accepted inheritance, and who are now standards of orthodoxy. All later drifts of speculative thought, and especially the latest drifts of his own day, seem to make him uncomfortable. He actually warns against them as

products of what he calls "the lust of innovation." This is a matter of so much consequence in the study of Dr. Brown's character that it ought not to be passed over lightly.'

This one idea which Professor Masson notices as having taken such a strong hold of Dr. Brown's mind, was, I confess, at the period when he wrote his paper on 'Locke and Sydenham,' strongly sympathised in by myself. Having imbibed the teachings of such masters as Abercrombie and Syme; and impressed by the close personal observation of morbid signs and symptoms, while watching the wonderful evolutions of the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, Dr. Brown could not abide—to use a common but expressive phrase—the theories, and hypotheses, and reckless experiments of the period. He thus saw science suffering at the hands of professed devotees by rash speculation, and not benefiting as it ought by the observation of facts carefully ascertained from the exercise of the senses, and arranged and applied by inductive reasoning. It was in reality the science of healing that he pleaded for, perfected by the practice of its art; and, as the relations of these to each other

now stand, I am convinced that, had he lived to the present time, he would have hailed with greatest satisfaction the wonderful developments on proved and rational basis, and estimated the advances thus accomplished as of great value in the interests of truth and humanity.

Enough has, I think, been quoted from Dr. Brown's published writings to show that in their style, intellectual power, humour, pathos, genial spirit, there is a most distinct INDIVIDUALITY, while there is in them much to admire, enjoy, and afford matter for reflection. I should imagine there can be little disposition felt by any one to subject them to very close—far less adverse—criticism. In a letter which I had from the venerable author of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, dated 24th August 1890, he says: 'Dr. John Brown was one of those few authors whom we love too well to criticise; not that he had anything to fear from criticism, for his subjects were always interesting, and his style a model of simplicity and purity. But we take him to our hearts almost before he has got hold of our intellects. . . . All the passages you have quoted

from him, all that you have told about him, awaken the feelings with which I read 'Rab and his Friends' and 'Marjorie Fleming.' I have found much instruction in reading his 'Loeke and Sydenham,' but the tenderness, the sweetness, the natural pathos of these two stories give them a special place in my affections.'

As I have already said, all Dr. Brown's writings bear the unmistakable stamp of originality; their character is unique, and the style unquestionably his own, not formed on any classic model, ancient or modern. They have been spoken of as bearing some resemblance, if not in style, at least in matter, and especially in humour and pathos, to those of the gifted author, Charles Lamb. But although John Brown is known to have admired the genius and enjoyed the humour of Charles Lamb, the individuality of their respective works is markedly distinct, as might be expected, from the widely different early social relations, environments, course of life, professions, and nature of trials of the two men, impressing a different stamp on the mind and heart. Dr. Brown's writings were, as he himself expressed

it, 'done on the quick.' They are, therefore, natural and pure; full of wisdom, goodness, and truth; drawn as it were from the deepest recesses of a spiritual nature. In saying this I may transfer a figure of his own in writing of a worthy and learned friend, long since gone before him:—'His thoughts were as a spring of pure water flowing from the interior heights of a mountain, distilled by nature's own cunning. . . .' And again:—'He was of the primary formation, had no *organic remains* of other men in him: he liked and fed on all manner of literature; knew poetry well; but it was all outside of him; his thoughts were essentially his own.'<sup>1</sup> It may truly be said that literature was his daily food. He hungered and thirsted after knowledge of all kinds. From boyhood to the end of his life his reading was extensive in prose and in poetry, and he had consummate facility and discrimination in extracting the essence of that which was wholesome and nourishing for the mind; and of culling that which was interesting, beautiful, and sweet. All his published writings, more especially 'Locke and Sydenham,' 'Henry Vaughan,' and

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series ii. p. 89.

the 'Excursus Ethicus,' show how richly cultured and stored his mind was; and how reliable he was as a CRITIC.

In Dr. Brown's CORRESPONDENCE the same power of separating the wheat from the chaff in literature is as conspicuous, while in that familiar medium of communication his excellent qualities of head and heart were abundantly reflected. Sir Theodore Martin writing to me lately says: 'To the last I remained in touch with Dr. John, and I cherished every letter—and they were many that I had from him—every one containing something so finely phrased, and so delicately felt, as could have come from nobody but himself.' His style was not in flowing and finished periods, as, for example, in the Letters of Cowper, that paragon of epistolary writing; for his sentences were short, and transition from one subject to another often singularly abrupt. But the charm of Dr. Brown's letters lay in their naturalness, freshness, and homeliness; quaint expressions varied with strokes of easy humour; and generally expressed in a fine sympathetic tone, with

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loving touches of the good in persons and things,—even of things which, to some people, might seem trivial. With all this, however, there was no lack of pithy remark, or dogmatic criticism on topics of the day, literary and political.

In the foregoing pages these characteristics have been to some extent illustrated by the letters already quoted, but the following limited selection from the large correspondence to which I have had access may throw additional light on the many-sided aspects of Dr. Brown's mind and character; and, while pleasingly recalling him to the memory of old familiar friends, may convey to others who have only known him through his published works a more complete conception of the man. These letters I have arranged as much as possible in chronological order, Dr. Brown often noting only the day of the week on which he wrote. I have also carefully excluded matters which concerned living individuals, and everything which was of too professionally private or sacred a nature to be brought before the eye of the public. For the same reason the publication of any of the many letters I received from him is not admissible.

## ADDITIONAL SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE

EDINBURGH,

23rd August 1834.

To George Harvey, Esq.

———, ———, Stirling.

MY DEAR FRIEND,— I write this more by way of provoking you to write than from having any news. I am wearying in my own selfish way for your reappearance, and find that somehow or other the 'Painter lad' is concerned rather closely with my comfort and enjoyment. The bathing has been at a stand-still, and the walks up Dublin Street are no longer so frequent, and I have forgotten to look up at the truly darkened window within which used to sit Mr. G. Harvey painting the 'Glaiks' and the Water Lily. I hope you have been comfortable and well, indeed I am sure you must have been happy at home and beside your father, who must even now appear at the very gate of heaven, shining more and more unto the perfect day. I know of no sight more heavenly than that of a good old man, whose tabernacle is gently changing, while his mind unbroken and full of good hope has already entered within the veil, and looking back on a long life of humble godliness can say, 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life;' and forward, can add, 'and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' I cannot tell you how I envy such a state of mind. I am sure it is the only right one, and yet I am not sure that I am in it; indeed I am almost quite sure I am not, but I have no business vexing you

with these black thoughts; indeed you must almost laugh at me halting in so stupid a way between two opinions—*knowing better, doing worse*. You must excuse this, and if you and I continue friends you must bear with a great deal more. . . . The engraving<sup>1</sup> has been framed and looks nobly. You mentioned that a front light would be best, but I found that the glaze of the glass made the figures almost invisible. I have hung it near one of the windows, pretty low down, so that the particulars are well seen. Grandmother is greatly delighted with it, and is making discoveries daily and repeating them with great glee. The state of the *Poll* at present is 44 human heads, 4 Canine, and 6 Equine, but it is understood that the indefatigable old lady will be able to report and discover sundry more. The more I look at it the more I like it, and if I may be allowed to criticise, I like it more on account of the *general tone*, the religious feeling, than the cleverness and force of the drawing. I somehow look at it more as the production of a man than of a mere artist. I think this is the highest praise that can be given to any production of the hands. I hope you will not have reason to regret the vexation and trouble you have had about it, and that at least in a pecuniary view you will be no loser. I wish you would get some of the small ones *line-engraved*. I am wearying to learn where you are, and what you have been doing. If it is not too much trouble, will you write me soon? It will be a great gratification to me, though

<sup>1</sup> The Battle of Drumellog.

perhaps irksome to you. I have been working away in the old half idle, half busy, half serious, half foolish way. One thing however I am sure of—namely, that I am your affectionate friend,

JOHN BROWN.

[1834 probably, but not dated.]

To George Harvey, Esq. Stirling.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I should have answered your kind and most amusing letter long ago, but what with meetings of wise men, dinners, processions, gold boxes, etc., I have been truly crazed for the last fortnight. I was particularly vexed when I heard that you had been in on Monday the 15th. When are you coming here, and when are the nights of the toasted Biscuits again to begin? The whole town has been moved into a most ungainly gaiety, and nothing now will be tolerated but the last roarings of the lion, or some more *last words* from Earl Grey. I was at the dinner<sup>1</sup> and was amazed and delighted. The Chancellor<sup>2</sup> appeared to me the cleverest man I had ever heard speak,—such ease, variety and irresistible vehemence. When, toward the end of his speech, he spoke of the Tory Crew, after a long overwhelming sentence of abuse heaped to overflowing, he concluded with a *shriek* which made even his friends quail. He has been likened to a lion, but he is neither a lion nor a leviathan; he is an eagle, and has an

<sup>1</sup> The great banquet in Edinburgh to Earl Grey when Prime Minister, 15th September 1834.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Brougham.

eagle's *scream*. I can hardly believe any mortal failing to feel

‘The terror of his beak,  
The lightning of his eye.’

But I fear, if he has the spirit of an archangel, it is that of an evil one. Lord Durham took us all by storm : he seems the very soul of honesty. . . . I have been luxuriating in the Exhibition at the Academy. Etty's ‘Combat’ seems to me one of the finest pictures I ever saw, and Judith, as a majestic illustration of the deeds of a high-souled woman, is unequalled. I saw ‘The Foundling.’ I liked it of course, but there is more to me in the true half-finished sketch. There is a wonderful little thing of Roberts’—the Cathedral in Rotterdam ; and some of Thomson's peculiar touches. I am delighted to think, from what Logan<sup>1</sup> tells me, that you were at last doing yourself justice, and painting with more depth and seriousness of feeling than the vulgar taste may like ; but I am confident that it is there, in the pathos, the subdued tenderness of the Art, that you are strongest, and by which you will be seen to live longest. ‘The Rink,’ however, I trust is not forgotten. In the midst of all the worldly din and uproar in which I have been, you may be sure I have not been so caring of the most important of all things. I can, however, sincerely say that whether from mere slavish terror, or from real conviction of my utter ungodliness, I have had the realities of eternity oftener and

<sup>1</sup> The late Sheriff Logan.

more consecutively before me than for a long time. . . .  
—Ever your affectionate friend, JOHN BROWN.

To the Same.

51 ALBANY STREET,  
*July 20th, 1845.*

MY DEAR HARVEY,—Logan, I suppose, has informed you of our proposed invasion of Kilmun. I am delighted at the prospect of seeing *it* and *you*. I have been very much worn out with my own and other people's work, else I would have written to you sooner, but as soon as I come in and sit down I fall asleep!

. . . I hope you are getting stronger and that you are playing yourself like a very child, making your mind as well as your body run wild and at play. You have passed through a very strange year. The shadow of death has been very heavy and deep over it, but it has, I doubt not, and certainly *should* have made 'the Land of Emmanuel' brighter to you than ever, and more attractive. She<sup>1</sup> has been there for many months, and I doubt not has not seldom thought of you and her children. What a world of significance and of either comfort or terrible fear in the words 'the things that are seen are temporal, the things that are unseen are Eternal.' Mrs. Brown joins me in best regards to Miss Harvey and the children and yourself. I am already wearying for Thursday morning.—  
Yours ever, JOHN BROWN.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Harvey.

To the Same.

MONRO'S COTTAGE, CRIEFF,

*August 15th, 1846.*

MY DEAR HARVEY,—I write this first because I cannot help thanking you for having been in some degree the means of my being at this moment where I am, and as happy as I have been and will yet be.

It is at the top of the hill and commands a horizon of seventy miles at the least, the nearest radius of which is fifteen miles, and the furthest somewhere in Argyllshire, either Ben More or some big fellow near him. . . . The view towards Comrie is wonderful, every hour it has new beauties, and the Grampians lying all about in glorious confusion, and giving strength and a sort of awfulness to the exquisite beauties of the woods and waters. They keep me in a continual state of pleasant but solemn exaltation: 'the strength of the hills is His also'—'the perpetual hills'—'Who by His strength setteth fast the mountains being girded with power,' there is indeed no searching of His understanding. We had a day of unmingled delight on Wednesday. We got a gig, and all three (Catherine and Duchy and *me*) set off to Comrie; and by-the-by Mrs. B. intends writing you a complaint at your working upon her womanish credulity in the matter of the earthquakes. She sat for miles with ears cocked up for the hollow noises, but none came. However on returning they got up several very decent ones just before entering Comrie. I suppose



the earthquake had not been wide-awake at that early hour. St. Fillans! the lochside! its gleams and shadows and its peace profound!—big Ben Vorlich looking down with a surly smile and Duchy looking up at him with most insolent indifference: her gravity and utter nonchalance at the fine scenery, and her zeal and excitement at all the domestic cats, made our raptures very droll. At Lochearnhead we put up the horse and gig and took a walk of three miles up Glen Ogle. I, leaving my companions at the burnside, got among the blocks of enormous stones on the hillside, some of them as big as your house, and all of them were as if pausing on the way down the hillside; in fact I got quite terrified and thought I saw them above me beginning to move, and I cut off to my wife as hard as I could. How we did enjoy the grandeur and the primeval look of everything—all just as it was six thousand years ago. I have never yet seen the Highlands worthily expressed by painting—the spirituality is not rendered: I think you could do it. Why don't you? M'Culloch has not it in him, and Thomson *overdid* it, or rather he made it untrue and epical (as John Blackie would say). I would here in the stoutest words reiterate what I have often said, that you can paint landscapes better than any one in Scotland, and than any one I have seen out of it, except Turner. I have no doubt the being brought up at Stirling, with these great mountains with their glories constantly before and in your eyes, had much to do with the constitution of your mind, which, with a foundation of strong intellect and sense of humour, not



‘uninformed with phantasy,’ and that shaping spirit of imagination, enables a man to *realise the ideal to himself and others*. But how I have run on! I intended to fill this letter chiefly with my delight at seeing Wilkie’s ‘Sir David Baird.’ I saw it to-day and was quite overpowered by its greatness and exquisite feeling. They may talk of the ‘Great Painters,’ but if he is not one, I have nothing to say to *them*. It is a truly heroic picture, filling the mind and satisfying the idea of the case. What a dignity and oriental grace in the dead Sultan, and what a curl of scorn on his thin lip, and the women with their eyes and teeth, and their weak but womanly looks, and that sapper with his lantern, and the darkness over Sir David’s head, and the native doctor feeling Tippoo’s heart, and their Highlandmen, and the feeling of *understanding* the whole business and the realising the strange fact of our subduing and putting our feet on the neck of their Sultan and Great Mogul,—this struck me as one of the highest things about the picture. But I must end. . . . I shall see you when I return, which will be on Tuesday at the furthest. Give our kind regards to your sister and take the same to yourself.—Yours ever truly,

JOHN BROWN.

To the Same in London.

51 ALBANY STREET,  
24th April 1846.

MY DEAR GEORGE HARVEY,—You never did a kinder thing than sending me your hearty letter this morning. I

was just needing such a thing. . . . It was like an excellent oil. I went round and found you were off, and I suppose you would be about Melrose at that time, if you went by the 'Chevy.'<sup>1</sup> How I would like to have gone up with you, and have had a look at the 'Bible' in the rooms. Be sure and tell me all you hear about it. . . . Next week if I have time I mean *to do* Etty praising Judith, and some of his more intellectual pictures as stoutly as I can, but deprecating his wasting his powers on mere sensuous beauty. Then I shall have Scott and M'Culloch and MacIse, and finish off with some general observations on the place that one should hold in public estimation, etc. etc. etc. I took my father into the Exhibition and led him up to Wilkie, and left him. I saw him quite overcome with emotion, all but weeping. He did the same at the Glen.<sup>2</sup> He was quite delighted with the Mater Scotorum, and with Turner's Tay Bridge, which I prefer now very much to Mercury and Argus. Crichton is to try to get me a good print of the 'Distraining,' if you see him and can manage it without trouble. I like the 'Communion' more and more, and if I had any spare money would willingly buy a share in it. It is a grand print. I don't know any other in point of intense power comes near it, except that transcendent 'First Supper,' with which in my mind it has much in common. By-the-by, I am cherishing more and more the design of writing something for you to

<sup>1</sup> The 'Chevy Chase' coach.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Enterkin,' by Harvey.

illustrate. We shall be in no hurry, but we shall astonish the natives. It is the carrier and his wife, and will give you room for displaying every one of your powers; your humour as well as your pathos. I would be so delighted to sail down the stream of time for a few years after I am dead along with you. I have often thought of it, and if God spares us both it shall be done, and well done. Pretty impudence say you, and very like diffidence of your powers, and yet quite compatible. . . . —Yours affectionately,  
JOHN BROWN.

To Coventry Dick, Esq.<sup>1</sup>

51 ALBANY STREET,  
August 1845.

MY DEAR COVENTRY, . . . When we '*get to the other side*,' the shine will be taken out of many of our 'strong thinkers,'—'men of clear and fixed principles.' I saw a fine thought of Bishop Leighton's the other day. He says, 'the imperfect knowledge and the sort of fearlessness and vague conjecturings of this present world puts him in mind of a man lying awake in the dark.' . . . There is a great charm about Voltaire. His style is exquisite, as perfect as can be imagined. No *pretence*, no humbug, no sentimentality, no big words, no higher principles, no morality or principle whatsoever. What an exquisite grin he would excite if he were alive now-a-days, and cast his keen and cool eyes on such books as *Woman's Mission*, twelfth edition;

<sup>1</sup> See page 42, note <sup>3</sup>.

*The Mothers and Women and Daughters of England*, etc. etc. I know what you refer to about Socrates; I have read it, and all but wept at its beauty, and grandeur, and melancholy. It is to me a great wonder. Do you remember what *he* says to his accusers and condemners? I know no death but that of the *man*, Christ Jesus, at all to be compared to it. . . . Have a *whole* mind in some thinkings, never mind how wild, how fantastic, how contradictory, how unorthodox they be. It will do you good to fling them out, and with me they are safe enough, and will be welcome, because they are wild, and wilful, and wonderful, and it may be wicked. . . . Write to me when you are in the mood, and be sure you will always rejoice me.—Yours ever affectionately,

JOHN BROWN.

To the Same.

CRIEFF, August 18th, 1846.

MY DEAR COVENTRY.—I am still here, as in enchanted ground, and have been be-Crieffed for nearly a fortnight. I got your letter to-day and was amazingly delighted with it, and said amen to every sentence of it. . . .

Landor is rather an uncommon man than a great one; and a good deal of his fame is owing to that felicitous hap-hazard and wilful wildness of thought; and to his learning and large-mindedness, making it dangerous to do anything but praise him, lest one betray his own ignorance. But

after all, there is real stuff in him, and his style is divine, having strength and beauty and delicacy and unexpectedness and yet naturalness. His odd spelling I don't admire; and he is full of arrogance and pretence, and a sort of gratuitous quarrelsomeness. His arrogance seems a state, not an act, of his mind, and it mars, more than he is aware, the effect of his best thoughts. His '*Gebir*' I could not read through; it had too much colour in it, and too little light, and wanted a *backbone*. There is more imagination and more of the poetical element in his prose. There are some fine lines about flowers in one of his small poems; but he is not a poet, though he is poetical both in conception and reception, but he has not the divine gift of crystallising thought.

You should try and read his 'Shakespeare's Trial'; it is an extraordinary feat, but not a thing to be praised for much more than his showing how nearly it is possible, and how altogether it is impossible, for one man to be out and out any other man for a length of time. But then there are very fine bits in it; and it gives you now and then a glimpse of the true man Shakespeare, clownish and simple, and deep and happy-tempered, and unconscious. It is amazing how Landor in this and in his 'Imaginary Conversations' keeps up the spirit of the talk, and how impossible it is to anticipate what he is to say next. But after all he has rather proved the impossibility of these 'Imaginary Conversations' than anything else. They are tiresome and ineffectual and always come short of the idea.

You must read the 'Short Conversations with Essex and Spenser.' I may be wrong, but my recollection of it is as of something quite exquisite, full of tenderness and fine touches of character, and freer than usual of his faults. How could —— regard Savage as an ass? Perhaps he meant the wild ass spoken of in Job, snuffing up the East wind, who scorneth the multitude of the city, the range of whose pastures is the mountains, and who searcheth after every green thing and who regardeth not the urging of the driver! But the homely *asinus domesticus necnon stupidus* he is not. . . . Don't think Landor is one of my gods: he is half man, half devil, half god, and I would not greatly miss him were he to cease to have ever been. We have had in spite of the shabbiest of weather some royal explorations, C—— riding upon a little Highland pony as full of *mettle* as Mr. Landor. And no wonder; its ancestor by the male line was one of the Barbary Arabians cast ashore on Argyllshire after the wreck of that glorious humbug the Spanish Armada, so she (she is *a mare*!) has the Highland pride and bottom and spunk, with a fine mixture of Spanish grandiosity and Arabian wildfire. Yesterday we were at the 'Sma' Glen,' where the late Mr. Ossian was buried,—'a wonderful place for beauty and wildness and grandeur.'

Do look into 'Shakespeare's Trial' and above all 'Essex and Spenser.' 'The Pentameron' and many of the 'Conversations' I know nothing of. 'Pericles and Aspasia' has very fine passages, some of great tenderness, but, as a whole, it does not fulfil what is required in any such work of Art;

indeed, his obscurity is a cardinal and unpardonable sin, and a refuge too for the *want* as well as the *excess* of thought.

I go to Edinburgh to-morrow.—Ever yours,

JOHN BROWN.

To the Same.

51 ALBANY STREET,  
30th November 1846.

MY DEAR COVENTRY.—When am I to get your first Bute letter, the first of an endless series? I hear you are well and have been at Arran. I wish I could get off for two-and-a-half days to see you and the divine Arran hills. . . . Have you seen '*The Oxford Graduate*'? It is an astonishing book, full of goodness and truth and beauty, and written in language that Augustine, if he had been a Saxon, or Richard Hooker, or Jeremy Taylor might well be proud of. His theory of beauty, and his doctrine anent imagination and art, to my mind is the most satisfactory and the most worthily illustrated of any, ancient or modern. . . . —Yours ever,

J. B.

To the Same.

23 RUTLAND STREET,  
January 1856.

MY DEAR COVENTRY,—When I read Baden Powell's book,<sup>1</sup> which, however, I did with insufficient care and thought, I was greatly puzzled as to what could be his opinions on Christianity and the Bible. He seemed to me to believe in the eternity of matter, which is surely a form

<sup>1</sup> On Judaism and Christianity.



of atheism. All that geology seems to me to reveal in this matter, is the probable *immense age* of matter, a good many billions of millions of years older than we reckoned it, but it has never seemed to me to put away altogether—though it puts further back—the primal feat of God. The ‘*beginning*’ is not less beginning because it was some myriads further off. I did not like his book as a whole, though much of it is interesting. He is an unsettled, and unsettling, uncomfortable thinker. This sort of thing I dislike, for some reasons among others that are not very philosophical perhaps. I never get any length into the miracle question without getting stuck in mud and mist. What is the true *scientific* objective nature of our Saviour’s miracles? What *were* they? we know what they seemed to be, and are thought to be, and what they did. Do you know Hampden’s Bampton Lectures? You would like them; the style is hard and stiff, but the thoughts are excellent. . . . Good-bye, my dear, dear friend. May God grant me some measure of your contented, cheerful, faithful, loving spirit.—Yours ever,

J. BROWN.

WALLINGTON HALL,

To the Same.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,

13th August 1856.

MY DEAR COVENTRY,—You are a kind good soul, one of the kindest and goodest I have seen as yet, as far



as any one man can think the same as another on such matters. I agree with your lines on 'God and the Universe.' I like the old idea of God containing everything, and of old inhabiting His own Eternity and dwelling alone. Go on with your numbers. We had the same thundering and raining for three days, but fortunately for us there could not be imagined a house in which one may less grumbly pass three days indoors in the country. Sir Walter <sup>1</sup> and his smallest and briskest and artisticalest of wives are pleasanter than most people, and easier too. And there is a capital library of old and new; lots of the best books of prints, etc., such as you seldom see out of public libraries; a large and excellent museum of natural history, geology, and odds and ends; good music; and one of the finest collections of old china in England. He is a great oddity, a great antiquarian, and hungry for all new inventions and knowledge. A first-rate classic, a geologist, one of the best botanists and entomologists in Britain; a phonetic man, a teetotaler, and Maine Law man, a phrenologist, and, to crown all, a friend and patron and dedicator of our old Ellison, the Born-natural.

I announced under your 'E. V. K.' your conversion to Tennyson, and we turned up 'Maud' to the four lines, and we all agreed that no man born could withstand them. What say you now to 'Enone,' and the 'Gardener's Daughter'? . . . —Yours ever, J. B.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Trevelyan.

To Mr., now Sir Theodore Martin, K.C.B., after receiving a copy of his '*Life and Translation of Horace.*'

23 RUTLAND STREET,  
21st April 1870.

MY DEAR THEODORE MARTIN,—I have been shamefully (you may well think shamelessly) unkind in never till now thanking you for your beautiful *Horace*, with its additions. I have nothing to say for myself, except that I use all my old (and new) friends equally ill. I have fallen into a state of chronic heartlessness, can neither read, nor think, nor feel. Be thankful you are in all these respects quite the reverse.

I like your *Life of Horace* greatly, better than Lord Bulwer Lytton's, and your translations better still. His seem to me bitter bad.

The book, which many a time has been beseeching to be thanked for, was lifted by me just now from under some others where it had been buried, and I opened it at page 239—open you it there, and tell me if that first half of 'To Næara' is 'no that ill' done. Good-bye, my dear old friends. God bless you both and keep you long to each other, and may you do as an old couple did the other day—the gardener of Mugbie Hill and his wife. They were both ill in the same room, he died in the morning and she at night, never having known that he was gone and being spared that pang;—so be it to you two spouses—without the illness. Remember me with much regard to your *sine qua non*.—Yours ever affectionately, J. BROWN.

On receiving copy of '*Life of Horace*' in the 'Classics for English Readers.'

23 RUTLAND STREET,  
EDINBURGH, 20 Sept. 1870.

MY DEAR 'THEODORE MARTIN,'—Felix tu! Thanks for this delightful fireside *Horace*. I have been sipping it in my easy chair and with delectation all evening, and thinking how pleasantly the 'lonely kindly man' would turn over the leaves, if Blackwood would only send it ('from the author') to the Elysian Fields! You are a sort of wonder to me. You must have a roomy skull. I was glad to get a little note from Miss Thackeray, and very sorry to miss her. She is a fine creature, and has won for herself a tidy bit of freehold, down to the centre and up to the zenith, with which nor man nor woman may intermeddle. I am sure you (dual) are good and kind to her. That is just and good—your bit about her father—satire and sympathy, as the natty Neaves had it.

Good-night! my dear old friend. Don't I see you in that light blue dress with hooks and eyes, and an upright martial collar—at æt. 8 the envy of all Arnott's!<sup>1</sup> Yours and the *placens uxor's*.—Ever truly,

J. BROWN.

To Mrs. M—.

MOULINEARN,  
11th Sept. 1874.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I don't think I can visit your—why not boldly call it '*AIRTS*,' this time?—and to my sorrow.

<sup>1</sup> Writing-school, Edinburgh.

I went and saw ——, and that glorious baby. What legs! what potentiality, lurking in these folds! what a serene susceptibility! —— showing off his legs was a study for Parmegiano. By-the-bye, John Ruskin has sent me plates of Fra Angelico's 'Marriage,' and 'Death of the Virgin,' which, in spite of their heavy killing shadows, are wonderfully sweet and spiritual. Did I tell you how pleased I have been with Myers's '*Catholic Thoughts on the Bible and Theology*'? It is excellent. You don't need to read 'good' books, because the seed is in yourself, but this is one you would rejoice in. Much of it is so like Mr. Erskine (Linlathen), but it is more compact and crystalline than his, and has much of his lively love and fervour. Tell —— that he is a deacon with the gun; I like him more than most. J—— and B—— are coming to-night to go up all sorts of inaccessible rocks between this and Ben Nevis. We had a great reading of Cowper last night. What a true poet as well as a deep Christian he is,—spite of his sad personal gloom. . . . Yours sincerely,

J. B.

The following letter was in answer to one from Sir Theodore Martin sending him a copy, privately printed, of Lady Martin's '*Letters on Ophelia and Portia*.'

23 RUTLAND STREET.

EDINBURGH, 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1880.

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,—Thanks for your kind letter and the gift of these two delightful letters. I have just

read them with great pleasure, and the Lady Helena and you must pardon me for adding, with surprise. 'Can she do this, too?' said I to myself. I never read anything so good on Ophelia. The dear young thing, 'in the first garden of her simpleness,' has never before had such justice done to her sweet virginal nature; and it is excellent on Gertrude, and fresh. Of Hamlet, who can say what suffices?—but what Lady Martin says is to the quick—the acorn in the flower-pot serves for much. All that early autobiographical bit is delightful, and why should we (the great We) not also get it?

The effect of Hamlet's nature on Ophelia's is exquisitely done, and, as only a woman could say it, she opened out to him as a blossom to the sun. . . .

Portia is very good, though Ophelia is more original. It set me to read the end of the play. How delicious all about the rings! and the using her juridical training is brought out well. . . .

Have you read *Don Quixote* lately? If not, do—if possible, of course (and what in that line is not possible to you?) in Spanish. Lowell told me the other day that all English translations are 'brutal,' and Lockhart's dishonest; but I know no better, and anything brighter, sweeter, funnier, altogether better than the Don and Sancho I know not in Shakespeare, Scott, or anywhere. . . .

I daresay you know the old French song which is still sung by the Breton sailors, and which Thackeray told me was the original (!) of 'Little Billee.' If you don't, it will

amuse you both, but his touching has adorned and enriched it. Why did he die? Why didn't he come down here and get cured by Syme? and he would have been alive now, and '*Denis Duval*' would have been finished. He was at quite his best when he died. . . .—I am, yours ever sincerely,  
J. B.

To Lady Martin.

23 RUTLAND STREET,  
1st Jan. 1882.

DEAR LADY MARTIN,—Let me thank you from my heart for your letter and for 'Juliet.' You must be sweet-blooded, and so must he. I have just finished Juliet, and it is the next best thing to hearing and seeing you as Juliet. It seems to me wonderfully done,—to have the power of doing the thing and the power of describing. How it is done seems to me a very rare combination. That is interesting about Dickens [an anecdote of him told in a note in Lady Martin's letter on Juliet]; I wish I could like him as you do, or as we both like Thackeray.

I heard how you entranced them at St. Andrews. You will get all these women into a volume, and a portrait of yourself.

What became of M'Leay's water colour of you?<sup>1</sup> I used to like it with its short forehead.

I am glad you think of Imogen, 'white, radiant, spotless,

<sup>1</sup> It was presented to the Edinburgh National Gallery by Sir Theodore Martin.

exquisitely pure.' I am not sure that I do not love her more than any of them. It is fit that you should end with Rosalind. How I hear and see you now! Do you remember a wreath that was flung to you? But I must not weary you.

Let me again thank you for your forgiveness and for your 'Juliet.' — Yours and that faithful man's, ever affectionately,

J. BROWN.

Some of the foregoing letters, and many of those which are withheld, afford abundant evidence of Dr. Brown's highly strung and deeply reverent spiritual nature. Although in certain moods he appeared and wrote in apparent exuberance of spirit, there was more frequent evidence of an undercurrent of serious thought and feeling.

SPIRITUALITY, I should say, was perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of his mental constitution. As an essence it pervaded his entire life and work. Although reserved on sacred subjects, it was frequently apparent to those most intimate with him, that even in states of sunny brightness and sparkling humour, a dark cloud of emotion overspread his countenance, revealing the workings



of the inner man. In his later years he was often seen with his eyes closed, as if excluding the outer world from his thoughts, and giving himself up to devout contemplation. Divine reverence and human sympathy were as parts of himself. This was alike shown in a keen appreciation of nature—the glory of the heavens, and the grandeur and beauty of the earth; in his gentle and tender consideration for the feelings of others, and in sympathy with all sorrow and suffering. As a physician frequent contact with suffering humanity unhinged him much, and was indeed one of the greatest burdens of his life. It was from such impressions of God's perfections and man's sinfulness; and from such indwelling sensibilities and views of life's seriousness and his own unworthiness, that like Wordsworth, Cowper, Coleridge, and some other gifted men, he suffered acutely at times: and thus too it was that his occasional strokes of humour were shaded by a grave expression, and a quaint or cheery remark uttered while his aspect otherwise indicated a degree of mental depression. Doubtless, however, from the possession of this highly sensitive nature and keen spiritual discern-



ment, the world has benefited not a little by his writings touching responsive chords in many hearts.

A near relative of his own, and one who knew John thoroughly has truly said:—‘He was a sincere, humble and devout Christian. His religion was not a thing that could be put off or on, or be mislaid or lost; it was *in* him, and he could no more leave it behind, than he could leave his own body behind. It was in him a well of living water, not for himself so much as for all around him. And his purity, truth, goodness, and Christ-like character were never more clearly seen than in those periods of darkness when they were hidden from his own sight. He very seldom spoke expressly of religion; he held “that the greater and the better—the inner-part of man is, and should be private—much of it more than private;” but he could not speak of anything without manifesting what manner of man he was; and his ideas on religion can be, imperfectly no doubt, but so far, truly gathered from his writings.’<sup>1</sup>

In his interesting paper on Arthur H. Hallam, Dr.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Crum Brown’s Obituary notice, *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, June 1882, pp. 1130-4.

Brown's views regarding divine revelation are thus strongly and beautifully expressed. He says:—"There is something very striking to us in the words, "Revelation is a *voluntary* approximation of the Infinite Being." This states the case with an accuracy and distinctness not at all common among either the opponents or the apologists of *revealed religion* in the ordinary sense of the expression. In one sense God is for ever revealing Himself. His heavens are for ever telling His glory, and the firmament showing His handiwork; day unto day is uttering speech, and night unto night is showing knowledge concerning Him. But in the word of the truth of the gospel God draws near to His creatures; He bows His heavens and comes down.

"That glorious form, that light unsufferable,  
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty"

he lays aside. The Word dwelt with men. "Come then let *us* reason together;"—"Waiting to be gracious:"—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man open to Me, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me." It is the father seeing the

son while yet a great way off, and having compassion, and running to him and falling on his neck and kissing him; "for it was meet for us to rejoice, for this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost and is found." Let no man confound the voice of God in His works with the voice of God in His Word; they are utterances of the same infinite heart and will; they are in absolute harmony; together they make up "that undisturbèd song of pure concent;" one "perfect diapason;" but they are distinct; they are meant to be so. . . . Nature and the Bible, the Works and the Word of God are two distinct things. In the mind of their Supreme Author, they dwell in perfect peace, in that unspeakable unity which is of His essence; and to us His children, every day, their harmony, their mutual relations, are discovering themselves; but let us beware of saying all Nature is a revelation as the Bible is, and all the Bible is natural as Nature is: there is a perilous juggle here.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Brown's own clergyman,<sup>2</sup> in referring to

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Series ii. pp. 469-71.

<sup>2</sup> The late Rev. W. G. Forbes, of the United Presbyterian Church, Eyre Place, Edinburgh.

his death, said among other things:—‘His religious faith coloured all his thoughts. His was a religion of the heart, and not of the life only; it appeared more in profound devoutness than in exulting demonstrative faith.’ These and all Dr. Brown’s utterances in his published papers and correspondence are in perfect harmony on religious faith respecting the revelation of God the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: they may well be pondered over in those days when there is so much doubt, so much scepticism in the air regarding these eternal verities. What could be more touchingly simple and reverentially expressed, what more indicative of firm belief in God the Father and in the living and divine personality of Jesus of Nazareth than is written in the concluding paragraphs of his lay sermons, *Plain Words on Health, addressed to Working People*?<sup>1</sup>—‘Good-night to you all, big and little, young and old, and go home to your bedside. There is Some One there waiting for you; and His Son is here ready to take you to Him. Yes. He is waiting for every one of you, and you have only to

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, Appendix, vol. i. p. 90.

say, "Father, I have sinned—make me"—and He sees you a great way off. But to reverse the parable, it is the First-born, your Elder Brother, who is at your side, and leads you to your Father, and says, "I have paid his debt;" that Son who is ever with Him, who is all that He hath. I need not say more. You know what I mean. You know Who is waiting, and you know Who it is that stands beside you, having the likeness of the Son of Man. Good-night! The night cometh, in which neither you nor I can work—may we work while it is day; whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work or device in the grave whither we are all of us hastening; and when the night is spent, may we all enter on a healthful, a happy, an everlasting to-morrow!

In the following letter—for to a few familiar and sympathetic friends he did venture at times to express himself freely—he says:—

*6th May 1864.*

MY DEAR FRIEND, . . . You should go on writing. You may rest assured it will do good. It is indeed very close

‘dealing,’ and is much needed in these days when nearness to God is getting rarer and rarer; and unless we are near, unless we are in God, we are without Him, we are far from Him,—away in darkness and cold, feeling less and less the attraction of His infinite Godhead. . . . Go on expressing yourself regarding the mystery of evil and misery, evolving the mystery of goodness, and happiness,—of God in Christ reconciling a whole world to Himself and therefore to itself. I have been thinking much lately of Jacob’s wrestling with the angel till the dawning of the day, and being blessed and gaining the unutterable Name only when touched in the hollow of the thigh and made to feel his own nothingness: ‘when I am weak, then am I strong. . . .’—Yours ever, J. B.

Again to the same friend, speaking of the power and duration of mutual love and tenderness, he says:—

‘It is the best proof that God and God alone is the full portion of our cup, and makes it run over; and that it is only reflexly through Him that His best creatures—His own dear children—enter into each other’s hearts and souls, and are commingled inextricably and for ever. We are lost, taken up in Him, and we pass out of Him carrying with us His fulness.’

In another letter he thus wrote to Mr. Coventry Dick :—

23 RUTLAND STREET,  
21st August 1864.

MY DEAR C. . . . I had a talk with Jowett to-day about Ecclesiastical matters. I think you and he would much agree. Yes, I back that paraphrase 'I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,' etc., against Renan and all his crew. Have you read the *Apologia*? A very strange, sincere, insane, beautiful, painful performance and confession it is. I am so glad I was grounded in historic Christianity in my youth, and am almost mechanically secured against these fellows and their guns and shells, their torpedoes and mines.'—Yours affectionately, J. B.

The spiritual side of art in painting had great attractions for Dr. Brown. Hence his delight in viewing some of the religious works of the old masters, and hence a bond of intimacy with our own distinguished limner Sir Noel Paton. And in the sister art of music, he also had intense delight, though he could neither play on any instrument, nor sing—'except in church.' When music was good he would sit a whole evening an enchained listener; and nothing pleased him more at his own house than when any one possessing a

fresh, sympathetic, cultivated voice sang choice ballads or sacred melodies to him. Handel and Beethoven were his favourite composers; and whenever the Oratorio of the Messiah was performed in our city, he was sure to be present. I remember him saying that he found its sublime strains more elevating, and more promotive of religious feeling than any sermon he ever heard. It was to him something higher than mere artistic pleasure,—it was a pure devotional exercise, exalting the soul and sanctifying the place.

Dr. Brown's views of the connection of morality and religion are admirably expressed in a letter to the late Principal Shairp of St. Andrews:—‘All true morality merges in and runs up into religion; all true religion blossoms and breathes out into morality, and practical and immediate goodness and love. What is the whole duty of man but his entire special morality; and what is man's whole duty?—love to God and love to man, not excluding himself as being a man.’<sup>1</sup> As the Rev. James Stalker

<sup>1</sup> *Principal Shairp and his Friends*, by Professor Knight, p. 265. John Murray, London.



says in his *Imago Christi*, 'one of the greatest services of Jesus to the world was to harmonise religion and morality;' and indeed it may be said that the love of humanity is synonymous with the love of Christ, and that the evidence of this in a man is an all-round practical goodness. So, in all the relations of active life the regulating principles of Dr. Brown's nature were simplicity, sincerity, integrity, truthfulness, humility, and love; and nothing was more abhorrent to him than irreverence, heartlessness, affectation, ostentation, pretentiousness, sham, or hypocrisy. At his mother's knee he was first instructed in the faith as it is in Christ; in the manse at Biggar he breathed a truly holy atmosphere; in boyhood and youth he was the companion of his godly father; in student life he passed unscathed through its perils; he early entered the communion of the church of his fathers; and to the last was a regular and devout attender on its ordinances. But it is not necessary to lift the veil of private life further than to say, that he was most affectionate in his family and exemplary in the discharge of all his personal and family duties.

Dr. Brown took a warm interest in the United Presbyterian Church, and had a large acquaintance with the clergy of that denomination in particular. Conjoined with myself as a medical adviser to its Mission Board from about 1850 until removed by death, he shared with me the examination of its missionaries, catechists, and their wives, ere they were sent to different spheres of labour; and frequently attended them when they returned to this country on furlough or sick-leave. In January 1878 each of us received from members of the Mission Board and others a handsome piece of silver plate as an acknowledgment 'for more than a quarter-of-a-century's gratuitous services.' On the day of his death, when the Synod of that Church was sitting, the late Principal Cairns announced the event to a deeply affected audience, and passed a warm and touching eulogium on the literary and religious character of Dr. Brown, and his services to the Church. This was followed by a tribute in equally glowing terms by the late Dr. John Ker, who concluded with these words:—'What a delightful thing it was that a mind such as Dr. Brown possessed

held so close to the great truths of the gospel that were so dear to them all; and that in the eventide it was light with him!’

That eventide came somewhat suddenly and unexpectedly, as for several months, to the delight of all his friends, Dr. Brown had been in excellent health and spirits, and fitness for professional work, even as in the best of his days. But in the beginning of May 1882 he was confined to the house with what at first appeared to be an ordinary cold, though he was able to correct some proofs to be added, I believe, to that edition of the *Horæ Subsecivæ* from which all the references in these pages have been made. Little did he or any one anticipate that this was to be the *finis* of his literary labours; and that ‘the windows’ were so soon ‘to be darkened’ and ‘the mourners to go about the streets.’ On the 8th, unmistakable signs of pneumonia and pleurisy were observed, and he seems to have had some premonition of what was to come, as he said to me, ‘Alexander, this is the beginning of the end.’ True it was, for although at first these symptoms seemed to yield to the treatment used by Dr. George

Balfour and myself, his strength rapidly failed; and he breathed his last on the early morning of the 11th.

During these last days of prostration, he seemed frequently to be engaged in prayer; the clouds, which so often during a varied and trying life obscured his spiritual horizon, had now no existence; and his whole aspect was that of patience, calmness, and perfect peace. To her who was so much esteemed by him, and who has written so lovingly of his life,<sup>1</sup> he said, some days before the end came: ‘*I know* that this is something vital,’—pointing to his chest. Then—as it happened to be Sunday—he asked if she had been at church, and what the text was; and being told that it was, ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.’ ‘Wonderful words,’ he said, folding his hands and closing his eyes, repeating slowly, ‘Be of good cheer:’ then, after a pause, ‘and from *Him*, our Saviour!’

On the 16th of May, Dr. John Brown’s mortal

<sup>1</sup> *Dr. John Brown and his Sister Isabella*, by E. T. M<sup>L</sup>., pp. 24, 25. Edinburgh, David Douglas, 1890.

remains were conveyed from Rutland Street to his father's burying ground in the New Calton Cemetery, followed by a large company of mourners. Along the whole line of route and within the cemetery ground, there was a throng of deeply sympathetic spectators, doubtless variously impressed and affected as they realised from personal intimacy, or otherwise, the loss sustained in the departure of the quaint, humorous, delicately subtle, and pathetic writer; the liberal-hearted and interested citizen; the beloved physician; and the sweet, gentle, and genial friend. These manifestations of profound sympathy and sorrow were in strange contrast with the cloudless sky and bright sunshine of that day, which lit up Princes Street, along which 'Randolph'<sup>1</sup> had so often trod, and for the preservation of whose beauty and surroundings he had so spiritedly written.

Thus lived and departed one who was loving, lovable, and beloved: whose memory is warmly cherished by all who enjoyed his friendship and society; and whose name will doubtless be handed

<sup>1</sup> The *nom de plume* of Dr. Brown's letters in the *Scotsman* on the amenity of the city.

down to posterity as one of the most original and charming of writers,—nearly the last of that remarkable galaxy of talented men who adorned our city during the last half century. ‘Mark Twain,’ with whom Dr. Brown more than once had pleasing personal intercourse, writing to a friend recently, expressed himself in these happy and forcible words: ‘He was the most extensive slaveholder of his time, and the kindest, and yet he died without setting one of his bondsmen free.’

The *In Memoriam* notices which appeared immediately after Dr. Brown’s death in the newspapers and journals of the day, all breathed the same spirit of loving and reverent admiration. With three of these, in verse, I will close this narrative, laying them, as it were, as wreaths on the tomb of my departed friend.

### JOHN BROWN

THE yellow violet on the hill  
Came forth to-day in tenderest mien,  
A month before its earliest time,  
And up my heart leapt full, I ween.

But sudden rose a saddening thought,  
That quick repressed the impulse meet,  
For I had learned the hour before,  
Thy noble heart had ceased to beat.

The violet comes from out the death  
Of winter, when thy tender eyes,  
That would have watched it with all love,  
Are closed to every glad surprise.

Thou, Scotland's son by birth and blood,  
The heir of all she loves, reveres ;  
Her pith of sense, her power of worth,  
Her humour, pathos, pitying tears.

No borrowed strain, no trick of Art—  
The home-grown theme thine offering ;  
'Ailie' and 'Rab,' 'Pet Marjorie'  
And 'Minchmuir' with its haunted spring.

Thy life a fount of simple joys,  
A sum of duties nobly done ;  
The meed of love, the memory dear,  
In human hearts for ever won.

Yet not unclouded was thy sky ;  
Some hours of doubt and dark were thine,  
Ere brighter grew thy close of day,  
The splendour of a sun's decline.

Thou truest friend, thou warmest heart,  
Where art thou now? my spirit cries.  
Within the veil, I see thee stand,  
And round thee are the pure and wise.

The brow, the face, we loved on earth,  
These, these are thine; what nobler guise,  
The crown above thy silver locks,  
And radiant o'er thy gentle eyes!

J. V.<sup>1</sup>

*May 12th, 1882.*

‘JEYE BEE’

(A favourite signature among friends)

O SWEET and pure and tender heart,  
With the child's gift to pray and play,  
That, artless in thy perfect art,  
Couldst blissful tears to us impart,  
And smile the blissful tears away.

Most human thou of human kind;  
Children with rapt gaze hung on thee;  
To thee dumb creatures looked to find  
The meanings which their wistful mind  
Was groping for, and could not see.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Veitch of Glasgow.



We were the better for the mirth ;  
We were the better for the tears,  
We were the better seeing worth  
In the dumb creatures of the earth—  
Their loves, their hatreds, and their fears.

Dear, loving soul, that strove to win  
The secret of the earth and heaven,  
Because thou lovedst them ; and in  
The ' Minchmoor ' and the ' Enterkin '  
The secret unto thee was given.

Thou mad'st ' Pet Marjorie ' the pet  
Of all our homes, and ' Rab ' our friend ;  
And quaint Pitlyal's lady yet  
Who shall not own him in her debt,  
For mirth no wit of man could mend ?

And now that wealth of joy and love,  
Must it lie buried in the grave ?  
Or has it gone to worlds above,  
For heaven had need of it to move  
Its life, too, with a larger wave ?

We are so little : God requires,  
The greatness of His thought to prove,  
Some altars burning with strange fires,  
Some souls that grasp at large desires,  
And run not in the common groove.

But heaven is richer for this gain,  
If life is poorer here on earth  
Which hears not that low voice again.  
And O the memory and the pain !  
The sadness of remembered mirth !

But clouds have passed away from thee ;  
There is no sorrow in thy voice ;  
And in the Presence thou dost see  
This jarring life's deep harmony—  
And that is well, and we rejoice.

WALTER C. SMITH.

#### IN MEMORIAM—DR. JOHN BROWN

A GENTLE master-spirit passed away,  
And the dear City that he loved so well  
No more shall see that fine head silvery grey ;  
But in our hearts his memory keeps its spell.

His own was like a deep and crystal well,  
Cooling the warm air in the still noon day,  
Its springs close hid in some green forest dell ;  
Bubbling sweet water fresh and clear alway.

Pathos was his, a soft and lambent light  
Touching to love and tears the hearts of men;  
And humour did his will—the Ariel sprite  
Came at his call and tipped his mirthful pen.  
How long before our Northern Athens know  
Spirit so blameless, heart so rare, as thou?

ROBERT RICHARDSON.

## APPENDIX

### NO. I

When the foregoing pages were ready for the press the following communication was kindly sent to me by Mr. J. R. Findlay of Aberlour, in response to a request for any reminiscence of, or letters from, Dr. Brown, during their long and close intimacy.

MY acquaintance with Dr. John Brown began about 1850, and soon ripened into friendship, close, cordial, and unclouded till his death. To me, as having charge of the literary department of the *Scotsman*, he addressed himself on all matters connected with books and art—in notes or notelets rather than in letters—besides which he was latterly an almost daily visitor at the office, so that we had frequent talk on all manner of topics. Most of his correspondence with me was therefore, so to speak, trivial and ephemeral, and was torn up day by day, but I have still a few of his letters ; kept as being fuller, if not more characteristic, than those minor effusions—for all were characteristic. As far back as February 1850, in a letter written from Bridge of Allan, to which he says he had been ‘ driven by my

doctor in search of sleep, which I have found in abundance here, and have been revelling in it,' he writes :—

‘Poor Sir William Allan is dead—another of our bright and familiar lights gone out—another of our best and ablest and most lovable men has “joined the famous nations of the dead!” Did you know him? He was a rare bit of true spirit, and humour, gentleness, fortitude and generosity. Up to the last he was at work with all his fire and industry at his picture of Bannockburn. The second last time I saw him I came upon him before he saw me—it was a scene Wilkie might have put out all his power into. The little, rugged, wasted, old man was lying on two chairs near the fire (like a shipwrecked but undaunted sailor), his shepherd’s plaid round him, his bonnet on his brow, and his legs covered with some of his Circassian and Moorish gear—he was lying there, gazing keenly all over his immense canvas, enjoying what he had done and kindling up at what he saw he could yet do.’

Brown’s cordial appreciation of his old friends—his elder friends, I might say in those cases—is shown in like manner in another letter of the same year :—

‘I send you Lord Jeffrey’s letter to Mrs. Sydney Smith. Read it, and if you can, insert it to-morrow with the heading “Lord Jeffrey’s last letter.” It is so like him and shows how entire he was to the end, how full of honest industry, candour, and that quick, rich, affluent intellect and affection which we will never again see matched. It

is a beautiful closing to the long, busy, brilliant, useful and happy day, of that divine old man, "whom never more shall we forget, or see." But I am getting newspaperish.'

I may be excused recalling the fact that the *Scotsman* was one of the first journals in the kingdom—I might perhaps safely enough say the very first—to discern that in Thackeray a new luminary had arisen above the literary horizon. In its columns warm praise was accorded to the early numbers of *Vanity Fair* when they were left unnoted, or only coldly welcomed, by London newspapers. Mr. Russel had a keen appreciation of the deeper, finer quality of Thackeray's genius as compared with that of Dickens, by whose popularity he was for a time overshadowed. *Pendennis* having fallen to me to review, Dr. Brown breaks out in excessive laudation of the notice:—

'My (or to speak in the dual sense "Our") biggest and best thanks for your review of "Pen." It is worthy of the book, which involves no end of the best praise. Your own remarks, and T. Campbell's bit about Brown, go to the quick of the matter. To make use of a perhaps too sacred illustration, he, Thackeray, is "quick and powerful, he pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" once there, he looks out and knows all things. I wish you had saved Helen from utter softness, as if she had

<sup>1</sup> Editor of the *Scotsman*.

a weak, or no *spine*, by referring to the true moral courage, shown by her in the matter of her "first love." This should never be forgotten, and the relation Laura (the spiritual one) bears to her in this way is wonderfully subtle and fine. But you will think I am going to write an article upon yours. I write chiefly to get quit of our thanks, and to ask you to send a copy of the *Scotsman* to Thackeray at Kensington. He needs and relishes this sort of rational praise. I wish in next number you would give us a paper on his style, both in *itself* and as the medium of his mind.'

Many such kind letters he wrote; sometimes of thanks for notices of anything he himself had written in reviews, often in praise of what he thought well-merited laudation or censure bestowed on books, or anything else that interested him; as when he says of two papers of Russel's: — 'I was so delighted with the pounding that ancient and ebriose apothecary — got in those two articles; it is the very truth, most sure!'

I find that I have preserved a copy of a letter of June 25, 1861, addressed to him along with his reply, or rather replies:—

MY DEAR DR. BROWN,—The *Scotsman* has long had a burden on his conscience in regard to his relations with you as a contributor. These relations grew up loosely; we ought long ago to have put them on a business footing. We cannot do so even now; however, we cannot commence a

new score without confession of our sins of omission hitherto. We therefore beg your acceptance of the enclosed fifty guineas of conscience money. You must not regard such request as an attempt to release ourselves in the smallest degree from the sense we proudly entertain of many and great obligations, but as a far too tardy and quite inadequate token of the fact that your inestimable kindness and service have not been unappreciated. This I write for and with all the best wishes of my uncle,<sup>1</sup> the editor, and yours most faithfully,

J. R. FINDLAY.

‘23 RUTLAND STREET,  
EDINBURGH, 25th June.

‘MY DEAR JOHN FINDLAY,—I would almost that this had not happened. Not that I am not only gratified at—but grateful for—this gift; far too big as it is for any value received. But my writing for you has been always so truly a labour of love, born and dying in and for that alone. It has been so much a greater pleasure to me than it ever can have been an advantage to you, this having your honoured and kindly vehicle for my diversions; I have so often been kept from dark thoughts by the little excitements thus caused, that I feel I am getting everything and giving nothing. Still I know it would vex you, and your heroic and chivalrous uncle, if I refused what besides is in itself always welcome to an Edinburgh doctor, and therefore I thank you for it and keep it, thanking you also for all your

<sup>1</sup> Proprietor of the *Scotsman*.



good nature and good services—without which any little glory I may have got with my pen would have been still less. Do you remember me writing you ages ago from Bridge of Allan begging to be put on the Free List? I often think of it as a very “cheeky” proceeding. Now tell all this to “uncle” and thank him and yourself evermore for the matter and for the manner of your gift. So, long life to the *Scotsman* and to all who work for Him!—Yours ever truly,

J. BROWN.

‘Received Fifty Guineas.’

‘23 RUTLAND STREET,  
EDINBURGH, 26th June.

‘MY DEAR PEN.,—I am taken so all of a heap by your letter and its contents, that I had not noticed your saying that “the editor” joined with you and the old man. I am very vex’d at this. Now this is a real and great addition to my gratification. I know he hates praise even when he knows it is due, and therefore I only thank him—I thank my stars that we have him—the noblest, most unselfish and truthful, as he is the most powerful public writer of our time, and a man who has political wisdom in the concrete to an amount and of a quality we have not seen since Burke.—Yours and his ever truly, J. BROWN.’

‘Pen’ is contraction for Pendennis, which he fancied an appropriate name or nickname for a young journalist. A little note, apparently referring to some sharp criticism he

had made on something that had appeared in the *Scotsman*, and against which I had remonstrated, illustrates very touchingly his tenderness of feeling and modest estimate of himself and his powers :—

‘My dear Pen.,—I am ashamed of myself and I ought never to have said a word after all your kindness and help. But the truth is, I now do nothing but the wrong thing. I have a curious infelicity about everything I do, or say, or feel, or don’t feel, or say, or think, or do ; still, I think I am, yours truly,  
J. B.’

Though Dr. John was inclined and desired to see good in everything and everybody, he was no weak or universal admirer. If he would admit of no flaw in the two gods of his idolatry—Thackeray in letters and Syme in surgery—he had a sound and sometimes a severe—though never bitter—judgment of men generally ; and indulged in not a few keen antipathies—hatreds would be too strong a word. But though he would indicate his dislike of shams and quackeries in medicine, in literature, or in divinity by a sharp phrase or two, he quickly passed on as from an unpleasant topic. Nor did his friendships cloud or warp his judgment of the powers or works of his friends. I find him saying of Sir William Allan, in declining to write a notice of his pictures :—‘I do not know what to say about Sir William. I do not estimate him high as a painter. He was a greater man than a painter, and I do not know that I could get up enthusiasm enough to make me write

anything worth giving you.' Of Dickens, again, he would certainly have said that he was greater as an author than as a man; and was most humorously severe on the meretricious style in which he performed his famous 'Readings.' I hardly ever thought the good doctor unjust except in his estimate of Thackeray's great rival; he could not abide the brother so near the throne.

In a letter forwarding a friend's remonstrance against a criticism of a popular picture he says:—'All the tribe are more sensitive than the ladies now-a-days are to our horrid hoofs when their tails are trod upon. Did you ever see the devil look out from their sweet eyes on those little and quite unavoidable, except by an acrobat, occasions?' Then he adds on one of those bits written across the paper, in which he indulged:—'What is the direct Scripture authority against having more wives than one? "No man can serve *two* masters!"' In a like spirit of fun he gives in another note what he calls, 'my last epitaph':—

'Beneath this stone lies Pat M'Larty  
In humble hope to rise in glory,  
His doctor's name was Moriarty,  
Who soon obliged him *arte mori*.'

In March 1882, the year of his death, he writes:—

'23 RUTLAND STREET,  
EDINBURGH, 1 *Mar*.

'MY DEAR PEN.,—To whom am I grateful for that very and far too pleasant notice? I am afraid it is to you, and

hope also. But you know there are some constitutions that sugar, however refined, is not good for; still, it is not all bad, for, with all my conceit, and no one knows its size as I do, I am greatly the better of such heartening as you have given, and need it too, at times.

‘There are many things in my mind I might say to you, as the past and its dead rise up—but enough—thank you; for you must prove yourself not guilty—I hold you now so to be—for this kindness and much else.—Yours and all yours, ever truly,

J. BROWN.

‘You are quite right about the occasional “too-muchness.”’

You, as his oldest and most intimate associate, must feel how faintly our dear kind old friend is reflected in those seraps. To them you will perhaps permit me to add a portion of a notice of his collected *Horæ* which appeared in the *Scotsman* a month or two after his death, as giving some expression to the feelings of all who, like ourselves, knew him long and well :—

‘When so rare a spirit as that of the author of *Rab and his Friends* passes from us, it adds something to the regret of those who knew him that they can convey no adequate conception of their loss to those who did not. It seems a duty to their friend’s memory to try; their failure, inevitable failure, is inevitably depressing. Genius of the greater, sterner, more aggressive sort is more easily described; the delicate, subtile, endearing qualities of a genius less robust perhaps, but not less genuine, seem to

evade delineation. Browning's poem, "Waring," reflects this feeling in regard to the unknown living; it is intensified and saddened in the case of the well-known dead. Still more emphatically so when the man is, or, alas! was, greater and better than his works—by which alone he can be most widely known—even though to know him by them be to love him. The kindly regard that surrounded Dr. John Brown, like a genial atmosphere of universal friendship, was largely the reflection and emanation of his own amiable nature; but it was based also in profound esteem for his high moral qualities, and in a latent acknowledgment of intellectual power which somehow or other never seemed to have full scope, or rarely worked at its strongest or best. Wise and delightful as his writings are, they all want the completeness of the man; they give no adequate conception of his fulness, his readiness, his playfulness and humour. He had passed through the dark valley of severe domestic sorrow and bereavement; the shadow of a great affliction hung ever around him; yet he walked amongst us in serene, if humble cheerfulness, his professional hours steadily occupied, and his leisure calmly devoted to letters and the claims of friendship. Though a clouded, his could not justly be called an unhappy lot; sunshine was shed over it by the love of all who knew him, and by the admiration of thousands who never saw him in the flesh, coming to him through many avenues. His fame was, like his own nature, gentle and mellow, yet true and firm. And as his character had in it what Burns

calls "the carle stalk of hemp," so, we venture to predict, will his literary reputation prove stable and lasting. It is much to say of any man, in those days of literary profusion, that anything he has done will long survive or be cherished; but it may safely be said that Dr. John Brown has given the world some things which, busy and oblivious though it be, it will not willingly let die. Perhaps, had time been vouchsafed, he might have given more; his mind seemed, after periods of inaction and depression, to have recovered tone and fertility just before he was taken away; and in the revisal of his works, and the spontaneous renewal of correspondence with friends, earnest seemed to be given of unexhausted or even unworked powers. He enriched the new edition of his *Horæ Subsecivæ* with several new papers, chief of which he modestly spoke of in his preface as "a few words on Dr. John Scott, Mr. Syme, and Sir Robert Christison," adding, queerly and very characteristically, "they are addressed more to myself than to any one else." They are, in fact, much of the nature of soliloquies—outpourings of the affectionate regard in which he held especially the two first-named men; attempts at expressing, without attempting to discharge, the debt of gratitude which he never ceased to feel for the early guidance and friendship and trust of those masters of their craft and his. Nor could he send forth a second edition of the latest of the series—the kind reception of which, a few weeks before, had astonished even more than it delighted him—without many characteristic touches.

One of these exhibited him in the previously unrevealed character of a writer of tender and graceful and exquisitely well-fashioned verse—possibly the only example of his exercise of that faculty; the fact that it was unique, if so it be, being perhaps accounted for by the deep and concentrated local inspiration it exhales. The lines are entitled, “The Tummel at Moulinearn,” with the motto—

“ . . . Numerisque  
Lege solutis. . . .”

In answer to a query as to their authorship he wrote:—  
“‘The Tummel’ is by your old friend, and as rough in its going as the river—but that’s to me a sacred region—its very names to me are dear;” then, as if he could trust himself no further, breaking away to a quite foreign topic. If the lines are ‘rough in their going,’ they are all the more truly descriptive:—

“Past runs the sunlit Tummel,  
Strong from his wilds above,  
Blue as the ‘body of heaven,’  
Shot like the neck of a dove;  
He is fresh from the moor of Rannoch,  
He has drained Loch Ericht dread,  
And mirror’d on Cairie’s waters  
Ben-y-Houlach’s stately head:  
He has mourned round the graves of the Struans  
Hid in the night of the wood,  
He glides by the pleasant slope,  
Where our old Dun-Alister stood.



Schiehallion has heard him chafing  
Down by his sunless steep,  
And has watched the child of the mountains,  
Deep in his loch asleep.  
He's awake ! and off by Bonskeid,  
He has leapt his Falls with glee,  
He has married the swirling Garry,  
And they linger in Faskally."

Never was an outworn metaphor more neatly managed ; dandled into freshness and neat suggestion, sparkling and lively as the streams to which it adds yet another name and illustration.'

I find among my papers a letter from Thackeray to Dr. Brown written at the very beginning of their friendship, evidently in reply to Dr. Brown's invitation that he should stay with him on his approaching visit to Edinburgh, when he delivered his lectures on 'The English Humorists.' Dr. Brown must have good-naturedly handed it to me as being like himself an early admirer of the great novelist. There seems no harm in your printing it here. It is sufficiently Thackerayish ; and shows the cordial relations between the two men at an early period of their friendship :—

'KENSINGTON,  
October 9, 1851.

'MY DEAR DR. BROWN,—I find your letters on my return home from the country, and thank you for them and your kindnesses all.



‘I don’t know yet whether it will be December or January when I shall behold Rutland Street and my friends there. I want to go to Cambridge in November if the scheme is feasible, but can’t move in it until the vacation is over and my friends in Cambridge are returned thither.

‘The gates of L’pool and Manchester are also open to me, and I shall take these places either before or after Edinburgh, as seems best to my advisers. Until the men are back at Cambridge, in about a week, I can’t, therefore, say when the Titmarsh Van will begin its career. But as I don’t intend to touch the proceeds of the lectures myself (beyond actual travelling charges) and resolutely invest all the winnings for my two girls and their poor mother, I’m bolder than I should be otherwise in the business, and determined to carry it through with brazen resolution.

‘In order to this end you see I must work as if nothing had happened, and am under stringent engagements to write a novel which will come out as I sail for America. Now to do this I must have my own way, my own lodgings, factotum, liberty, cigar after breakfast, etc., without all of which I can’t work ; and the forenoon being spent in study, the afternoon in healthful exercise, *then* comes the evening when we will trouble Dr. Brown to go down to the cellar for that etc., etc. You have brought me into very good company in print, I dare say there are good fish still in the sea.

‘With my best thanks and regards to Mrs. Brown,  
Believe me, yours most faithfully,

‘W. M. THACKERAY.

‘Wood shall be the man, and thank you.’

The postscript alludes to Mr. George Wood, Music-seller, who took charge of the tickets, advertisements, and hall for the lectures.

J. R. F.

*December 1892.*

## NO. II

Two hundred and sixty-four years have now elapsed since William Harvey published his treatise *On the Circulation of the Blood*, and dedicated it to King Charles I., who took a lively interest in that discovery; and although Harvey was derided by many in the profession and the public as ‘crack-brained’ during the years he was elaborating his theory, and for some time after the discovery was complete and given as such to the world, yet he lived to see its triumph; and ever since he has been regarded as the greatest physiologist the world has produced.

Hippocrates, Plato, Galen, Vesalius, Servetus, and several others, had certain vague notions as to the anatomy and functions of the heart and blood-vessels; and long before Hippocrates, the Royal Preacher, Solomon, in his surpassing wisdom, wrote in the Book of Ecclesiastes of the ‘pitcher,’ the ‘fountain,’ the ‘wheel,’ and the ‘cistern.’

But it remained for Harvey, after years of patient experimental investigation, to demonstrate the motor power of the heart, and the all-round circulation; and the glory of this brilliant discovery has never since been dimmed, although others, particularly Malpighi, perfected the physiology of it. If Harvey had possessed a microscope, he himself, in all probability, would have demonstrated the transmission of arterial and venous blood in the capillary circulation. The course of the circulation is now, therefore, established for ever, and the name of HARVEY immortalised by it.

Dr. Brown has written regarding Harvey, when comparing him as a representative man of *science* with Sydenham, representing the *art* of medicine:—‘No man, in teaching anatomy or physiology, when he comes to enounce each new subordinate discovery, can fail to unfold and enhance the ever-increasing renown of that keen, *black-a-vised*, little man, with his piercing eyes, small and dark and full of spirit; his compact, broad forehead, his self-contained, peremptory air; his dagger at his side and his fingers playing with its hilt, to whom we owe the little book *De Motu Cordis et Sanguinis Circulatione*. This primary, capital discovery, which no succeeding one can supersede or obscure, he would leave consummate to mankind: but he could not leave the secret of his making it; he could not transmit that combination of original genius, invention, exactness, perseverance, and judgment, which enabled him, and can alone enable any man, to make such a permanent addition

to the fund of scientific truth. But what fitted Harvey for that which he achieved greatly unfitted him for such excellence in practice as Sydenham attained. He belonged to the science more than the art. His friend Aubrey says of him, that "although all his profession allowed him to be an excellent anatomist, I have never heard of any who admired *his therapeutic way*." Dr Brown adds, 'A mind of his substance and metal, speculative and arbitrary moreover, with a fiery temper and an extemporaneous dagger as its sting, was not likely to take kindly to the details of practice or make a very useful family doctor.'<sup>1</sup>

The scepticism and derision which attended Harvey's discovery, also his protracted investigations in regard to the generation of animals, together with troubles in the State and his connection with Court life, must have had much to do in affecting his success as a physician. But the sympathy which he met with from Royalty in respect of scientific research, the turned tide of professional opinion in respect of his merits as a physiologist, and his advancing years, seem to have had a mellowing influence on a disposition which in youth was said to be choleric; his dagger was laid aside, and the latter part of his life was spent, we are told, in acts of generosity and munificence, which strongly exhibited the love he bore to his profession, and the anxious desire he had to promote its future interests. These acts were chiefly directed to the College of Physicians of London, whose fellows had come to give

<sup>1</sup> *Hor. Sub.*, vol. i. 'Locke and Sydenham,' pp. 59, 60.

him due honour and respect, and consisted not only in building, furnishing, and stocking a fine museum, but in bequeathing a sum of money to institute an annual festival in the view of 'maintaining friendship and mutual love in the profession.' He further desired that an oration should be delivered on these occasions to commemorate the example of those who had adorned the profession, and so incite others 'to search out the secrets of Nature by experiment.'

The Harveian Society of Edinburgh was therefore instituted, firstly, to honour the 'immortal memory of HARVEY;' and secondly, to advance the best interests of the profession.

### No. III

THE apprenticeship system, in medical teaching, which existed in the Minto House Hospital days, and which came to a close soon after 1837,<sup>1</sup> had great advantages when under masters who held office in an hospital, dispensary, or any large institution, and when studies and habits were properly supervised; but under other circumstances that bond was a waste of time, and the result in many instances unfavourable, even disastrous. In the early course of the student's life, under such masters as

See 'Harveian Address,' *Edin. Med. Journal*, May 1890, p. 1054.

Abercrombie, the Bells, Liston, Lizars, Syme, and others, there was less theoretical teaching, less done by cramming and more by private practical instruction and impressions photographed, as it were, on the brain from sight and touch. The study was thus made fascinating from its commencement by the gradual child-like opening up of a road through the gates of the senses to higher knowledge; and so by quickening the power of observation, desire was created for further insight of the mysteries of life, health, and disease. The tendency of this on passing the successive milestones of study was to intensify interest in the wonderful developments and adaptations both of the science and art of medicine; and thus it was in those early days at Minto House. Mr. Syme, being a first-rate botanist, chemist, anatomist, physiologist, and pathologist, as well as a skilful surgeon, met and talked with his apprentices in the large garret room,—the Museum of the Hospital,—and turned to excellent account in demonstrations, the anatomical, pathological, and surgical preparations, models, and plates which he possessed. Besides, they had the advantage of dissecting parts removed at operations; of conducting autopsies; and occasionally performing surgical operations on the bodies of those who died in the Hospital before removal for burial. Then in the ordinary work and routine of the Hospital and the Dispensary very great advantages were enjoyed: in the laboratory, pharmaceutical and dispensing practice; in the Hospital, experience as dressers, clerks, and assistants at operations; in the indoor

work of the Dispensary, personal experience from contact with an infinite variety of medical as well as surgical disease, even in the performance of the minor operations of surgery ; and at patients' homes, that sort of experience which is of incalculable importance to the young doctor. Besides all this, the knowledge obtained from Syme's clinical and systematic lectures, and assistance in consultation, tended to produce that fitness for general practice which no amount of cramming in the early days of study from books or lectures could accomplish. Now, of course, an apprenticeship system is incompatible with the enormous boundaries of medical science, and the present arrangements of our educational institutions. The gradual development of sound clinical teaching in the hospital—the introduction of which in Scotland was greatly due to Mr. Syme ; the institution of practical classes in almost all the departments of medical education ; and, latterly, the establishment of laboratories for scientific research, and now a fifth year added to the curriculum for clinical and practical training, have effectively met the remarkable evolutionary requirements of medical science and art.<sup>1</sup>

#### O. IV

As years advanced Professor Syme's fame as a surgeon and teacher was more and more widely extended. He was not a brilliant operator like Liston, or Fergusson, or

<sup>1</sup> See *Edin. Med. Journal*, May 1890.





*.Etat. 65.*

*From Engraving  
by J. Faed.*

*Lewis Tyron*



James Duncan ; but neat, cautious, sufficiently bold and rapid, while safe, from his thorough knowledge of anatomy. His hand too, which was remarkably fine in symmetry, was strong and steady ; and his self-possession and resource were always equal to a difficulty or the unexpected. As he was short in stature so was he laconic in speech ; his publications were conspicuous for conciseness of expression ; in consultation he was brief from accuracy of *tactus*, quickness of diagnosis, rapid perception of the important features of a case, and the honesty and common-sense of his conclusions ; and his prescriptions were also short and simple in the extreme. In correspondence, too, his rule was to write wide on either of two sizes of note-paper, according to the importance of the matter in hand, and never to turn the page unless there was some special requirement to do so. Indeed he was a man of brevity all round ; and as some one truly said, ‘He never unnecessarily wasted a word, a drop of ink, or of blood !’ By some he was considered short in temper—nay, he has been spoken of as irritable, quarrelsome, and cold-hearted ; but those who said this could not have known him intimately. That he was frequently engaged in medical controversy and strife is undeniable, but these were troublesome times in our profession in Edinburgh—very different from the present ; and in most of the frays in which he was a combatant he was either standing on the defensive from assaults on himself—the outcome of professional jealousy or clique—or had the courage,

in cases of unprofessional conduct, 'to rush in where angels feared to tread.' Those who knew him best esteemed him most. His hospitality was remarkable; and friendships once formed became attachments warm and enduring. Five years apprenticed to him, twenty-two years connected with him in Minto House Hospital, first in its public and afterwards in its more private character, and installed soon after graduation as his ordinary family attendant, a period altogether extending over nearly forty years, there never occurred a hitch or disagreement between us. I had thus the best opportunities of estimating the true worth of his character, seeing him in all circumstances—professional, social, and domestic; in times of joy and sorrow, of sunshine and clouds; amid the fame of surgical achievements, the enjoyment of worldly prosperity, as also in public and private trials, and when the pleasures and activities and triumphs of life came to a sudden close, and nothing remained before him but the prospect of the 'dark valley' and 'the beyond.'<sup>1</sup> As a surgeon and great operator, he was ever actuated by kind and humane feelings, deeply felt, although not effusively expressed. Often did I witness his sympathy with suffering which he was unable to relieve, and his distress in beholding the grief of others, when operative measures failed to preserve the lives of beloved friends. It was, too, a precept constantly impressed by him on pupils, that it was much more creditable

<sup>1</sup> His death occurred 26th June 1870.

to cure a disease by simple means than by operative procedure: or, as may be stated in the words of John Hunter's favourite maxim, 'Mutilation of the body is the confession of a surgeon of the imperfection of his art.' In regard also to vivisection, Syme strongly deprecated it unless some very important point in physiology or pathology was likely to be ascertained thereby; and he used to abuse Majendie and other experimentalists of the period for atrocities committed in haphazard, objectless research. Medical men and students have been greatly slandered for supposed acts of unnecessary vivisection; it was not practised at Minto House, and only on two occasions during my connection with Syme did he himself vivisect. These were the occasions—and I assisted him—when by operating on a dog he established the interesting and important fact of the power of the periosteum to form new osseous substance independently of assistance from the bone itself.

Bold as an operator, and also as a controversialist, I may also add, Syme was a man of no small pluck when circumstances were trying to courage. This I had frequent opportunities of observing; but it was conspicuously evinced on entering on his duties in the enemies' camp, so to speak, when performing his first operation in the Royal Infirmary, considering the amount and kind of opposition which he had for years encountered. The operation was one in which for expedition and dexterity, as well as ultimate success, his then antagonist Liston was justly

celebrated. The theatre was crowded—many medical men in addition to students and the apprentices of the rival surgeons being present. The first steps of the operation were executed with precision and rapidity, but an unexpected difficulty occasioning a brief pause having occurred, the friends of Liston and Lizars laughed while those of Syme looked stern and downcast. However, after a minute or two of calm examination, the operation was quickly and safely completed, amid an audible expression of applause. From that day Syme cut his way into universal favour, and had the largest and most loyal following in the wards of the Hospital.

Syme's translation to the Royal Infirmary on 14th May 1833 was doubtless of great importance to himself, the profession, and the public, inasmuch as it was, in clerical phraseology, 'a change to a wider field of usefulness,' namely, the possession of a larger number of beds for clinical instruction in connection with his professorship; but many regretted the termination of the 'Edinburgh Surgical Hospital,' an institution so unique in its character, so useful as a rival in medical education, and good works, and which had communicated a charm and impulse to the lives of many pupils; and no one regretted it at the time more than myself, as I was Resident Pupil, and had still before me nearly two years of apprenticeship.

## No. V

ALTHOUGH in May 1833 Minto House was closed as a *Public* Surgical Hospital, Professor Syme, having yet nineteen years' lease of the premises to run, and fifteen apprentices whom he was under obligations to supervise professionally, determined to continue a few beds in the House for private patients, and also to maintain the public Dispensary for the benefit of his apprentices. In this new phase of the institution, its superintendence was confided to me; and up to April 1834, when I was laid aside with a severe attack of typhus, a large amount of active, attractive, and beneficial work was carried on in both of its departments. From various causes, however, after that period the institution languished considerably; and Syme, feeling it financially burthensome, while unable from increasing engagements to direct its affairs and give professional supervision to the remaining apprentices, entered into an arrangement adopting Dr. Brown and Dr. Cornwall—a former apprentice—along with myself, as medical and surgical officers, while he was to be consulting surgeon and operator in cases sent into the Hospital by himself or when requested by us. Accordingly on 9th January 1837 the institution, with twelve beds, was opened as a Private Hospital or *Maison de Santé*; and the Public Dispensary was continued as formerly. The expectation of funds to support this new institution were,

the board of patients, the board of a resident pupil, the fees of pupils for dispensary practice, and pharmacy under a qualified apothecary, recognised by the medical authorities; and lastly, from public subscriptions and donations.

For ten years, under a board of Directors, these arrangements were carried on with much cordiality, and very great benefit to the public, and to numerous pupils; but Dr. Brown having now obtained a good footing in private practice and not caring for a longer term of hospital duties, while desiring more time for the cultivation of those literary tastes and aspirations which were afterwards turned to such splendid account, resigned the medical officership; and Dr. Cornwall, taking advantage of this break in the partnership, retired at the same time. Thus left, in 1847, in sole charge of the institution, I carried it on, with the aid of a number of energetic pupils, until 1852, the closing year of Professor Syme's lease.

The termination of an institution 'so unique in character, so wisely benevolent in design, and so eminently beneficent in its results,' as expressed in the Directors' last report, was deeply regretted by many. It was the only institution of the kind in Britain having for its object the treatment of diseases affecting a large class of people holding a most important place in society. The Hospital received those who were too independent in means and spirit to enter a public charity, although not rich enough, or so conveniently circumstanced as to obtain suitable attendance and other

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needful comforts during sickness; and the Dispensary afforded the means of relief to the same class, and to such of the industrious poor as entertained a praiseworthy dislike to rank with paupers, and who wished to contribute a little, in proportion to their ability, towards the means of obtaining relief. As evidence that in both departments much good was accomplished, I have only to state that in these fifteen years 1117 important cases, mostly of surgical disease, were boarded and treated in the Hospital; and that 59,568 patients obtained advice and medicine at the Dispensary clinique or attendance at their own homes. And not the least of the benefits conferred during that period was the valuable instruction in the practice of medicine and surgery obtained by 133 resident and non-resident pupils. It only remains to be stated that during the last two years of the Institution subscriptions from the public were not solicited, *it having become entirely self-supporting*, realising fully the expectation that an Hospital and Dispensary can be maintained on such principles.









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